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HOW DO SOCIAL WORK STUDENTS PERCEIVE THE MEANING OF RESILIENCE IN THEIR PRACTICE?

Thomas Philip Considine

A thesis submitted to the University of Huddersfield in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education

The University of Huddersfield

December 2019

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Abstract

In the face of chronic crises affecting our environmental, economic and social worlds resilience has emerged as the solution to these problems. Arguably, resilience is a laudable quality as it seeks to enhance the opportunity to thrive in the face of such adversity. In the field of social work resilience is normally associated with supporting vulnerable service users to face future adversity. More recently there has been an interest in promoting resilience in social work practitioners as they face more demanding workloads with fewer resources. The promotion of resilience is currently dominated by positive psychologists advocating personal responses to social problems. This approach has attracted criticism as it is in the service of maintaining a neoliberal model of society. Developing this critique further this is the first study to look at how resilience is understood in practice from a Radical Social Work perspective which seeks to locate its meaning in the material context of social work practice. This thesis presents a qualitative study which investigated how student social workers perceived resilience in their practice. Sixteen student social workers and six Practice Educators were interviewed using a semi- structured interview. Practice Educators were interviewed as they could provide a wider perspective on the student social worker's experience of resilience in practice.

The aim is to analyse the capacity for resilience to be deployed as mean of exercising domination over social work students in order to exploit and control them. More specifically this study draws on the ideas of Charles Wright Mills and his defining principles to relate the 'private' concerns of being resilient to the 'public' context which creates this experience. In other words, students are encouraged to see struggling not as a personal deficiency but as arising from intolerable circumstances. In seeking to expose the limits of dominant discourses of resilience an alternative conception of resilience is promoted which advocates a collective response to the challenges facing social workers

Table of Contents

Front page.....	1
Copyright.....	2
Abstract.....	3
Table of Contents.....	4
Acknowledgements and Dedication.....	7
Chapter I Introduction.....	8
1.1 Setting the Scene.....	8
1.2 Social Work and Resilience.....	10
1.3 Critical Investigation of Resilience.....	13
1.4 Resilience in Practice.....	14
1.5 A Radical Resilience.....	16
Chapter II Literature Review.....	18
2.1 Introduction.....	18
2.2 Resilience and Social Work Practice.....	18
2.3 Defining Resilience: the dominant model.....	20
2.4 Characterising Resilience: the ‘New Spirit’ of Capitalism.....	23
2.5 Critical Perspectives on Resilience.....	28
2.6 Social Resilience: rethinking the social in social work.....	29
2.7 Social Work and Social Resilience.....	30
2.8 Resilience and Radical Social Work	32
2.9 The Mainstream History of Social Work.....	34
2.10 The Radical ‘Kernel’ of Social Work.....	35
2.11 Radical Social Work from the 1970S.....	37
2.12 Radical Social Work eclipsed by Critical Social Work: 1980s.....	41
2.13 The Dominance of the New Right.....	43

2.14	The New Right Effects on Public Services.....	45
2.15	Resurgence of Radical Social Work SWAN.....	46
2.16	Social Work Education and Radical Social Work.....	49
Chapter III Methods and Methodology.....		57
3.1	Introduction.....	57
3.2	Setting the Context: Critical Theory and its Characteristics.....	59
3.3	Critical Social Work and Critical Theory.....	62
3.4	Radical Social Work's Critique of Critical Social Work.....	64
3.5	Charles Wright Mills and Critical Theory.....	67
3.6	Critical Theory and Role of the Researcher.....	69
3.7	Research Sampling.....	70
3.8	Research Coding.....	71
3.9	Data Analysis.....	74
3.10	Participants.....	77
3.11	Interview Questions and Their Rationale.....	80
3.12	Interviewing, Ethics and Power.....	85
3.13	Validity.....	88
Chapter IV Research Findings		90
4.1	Theme One: Ownership and Clarity of Resilience.....	90
4.2	Defining Resilience.....	90
4.3	Making Sense of Resilience.....	94
4.4	A Critique of Resilience.....	95
4.5	Theme Two: Capacity for Exploitation.....	96
4.6	Resilience as Exploitation.....	96
4.7	Resilience for Social Inequality.....	100
4.8	Resilience as a response to Austerity.....	104
4.9	Resilience cannot be faulted.....	109
4.10	Resilience as normative oppression.....	110
4.11	Resilience and Gender.....	111
4.12	Theme Three: Resilience as support, not a challenge.....	112
4.13	Resilience as Emotional Containment.....	112
4.14	Resilience as Self-Management.....	117
4.15	Resilience is helpful, but not the answer.....	120
4.16	Resilience as a Commodity.....	125
4.17	Resilience as much a problem as a solution.....	127

4.18 Theme Four: A Social Model of Resilience.....	129
4.19 Social Resilience.....	129
4.20 Social Work and Social Resilience.....	132
Chapter V Conclusion.....	134
5.1 A Community Resilience Paradigm.....	134
5.2 Towards a Radical Resilience.....	139
5.3 Radical Resilience and Radical Social Work.....	139
5.4 Radical Resilience and New Social Work Radicalisation.....	141
References.....	144

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This thesis is dedicated to the memory of my late parents, Anthony Considine and Bridget Ellen Considine.

My father died in 2007 and my mother passed away on the 12th June 2019.

They did their very best for me and I know from professional experience that this is a rarer quality than we think and I will always be indebted to them for all they did for me.

Chapter One: Introduction

Setting the Scene

Resilience has emerged as the answer to a world in crises. The crisis can be summed as follows:

...during the past four decades, the economic performance of capitalism has deteriorated. The global financial crisis of 2008-9 make it manifest...Capitalism's core credential of steadily rising living standards for all has been tarnished: it has continued to deliver for some but has passed others by... capitalism is not working...a majority now expect their children's lives to be worse than their own. (Collier 2018: 4-5).

The former president of the Rockefeller Foundation and academic Judith Rodin has cited resilience as the answer to present troubles. She claims that: 'In the twenty- first century, building resilience is one of our most urgent social and economic issues because we live in a world that is defined by disruption (Rodin 2015: 4). She argues that learning to be resilient can bring significant rewards:

Ideally, as you become more adept at managing disruption and skilled at resilience building, you are able to create and take advantage of new opportunities in good times and bad. That is the resilience dividend.... It is about achieving significant transformation that yields benefits even when disruptions are not occurring (Rodin 2015: 4).

The problems identified by Collier as part of a failing economic system are presented by Rodin as part of the natural order of human affairs. To be resilient means to be adaptable, that is, to transform oneself in such a way as to seek out new advantages in the face of disruption. The language of dividend and yield evokes discourses of corporate business which indicates whose interests are being served by those advocating resilience as a solution to social

problems. Rodin's argument appears to evoke Schumpeter's notion of 'creative destruction' as the 'disruptions' are accepted without question, it is the ability to take advantage of such turmoil that counts (Schumpeter 1994: 82). It is this predominantly individualised view of resilience as personal responsibility, or narrow group interests, that is needed to both cope with and overcome adversity.

On the face of it, championing of resilience is quite laudable. As economic and social crises affect our world, the ability to be robust, to endure and adapt, appears to be positive. Some argue that the current generation of young people are being denied the opportunity to develop resilient intellectual and psychological qualities as they are allowed to exist in an educational environment that protects them from robust challenges to their existing views (Lukianoff and Haidt 2019). They are being 'coddled' and are consequently unprepared to face the rigours of life beyond being a student. It is proposed that a teaching culture needs to be embedded that prioritises intellectual hardiness. Education, at least in some conceptions, is seen as preparation for life and enhancing resilient qualities is ostensibly a good thing (Lukianoff and Haidt 2019). Young people are told they must learn to be resilient in the face of such difficulties and any complaint attracts the label of 'snowflake' generation (Davies 2018).

The last ten years have seen an increase in research examining the relationship between resilience and social work practice (Greer 2016). Resilience has been incorporated within the professional framework for social work in England and Wales, illustrating its significance for practice (Collins 2016). Although resilience has become a ubiquitous term in social work discourse, as it has across many areas of social policy, its meaning and application in practice is less clear (Chandler 2014). In the field of social work research, a dominant notion of resilience has fallen under the orbit of positive psychology, with an emphasis on how individuals can acquire resilience to improve practice (Kinman and Grant 2014). There has been some criticism that this approach offers a socially-blind model, which emphasises individual responsibility at the expense of the social context (Rajan-Rankin 2014). It is also criticised as fitting neatly into neoliberal ideology (Neocleous 2011). The question as to how social work students understand resilience in their practice is to investigate the politics of resilience. That is, to raise questions around how and by whom is resilience defined? In what ways is it deployed and what purpose does it serve?

My research is the first study to look at how resilience is located within social work practice from a Millsian perspective. It involves analysing resilience as means of exercising domination over social work students inasmuch as resilience can be deployed to exploit and control students. Consequently, it can make students feel disaffected in that they are encouraged to see failing as a reflection of their own deficiencies rather than arising from intolerable circumstances. This study will draw specifically upon the ideas of Charles Wright Mills and his defining principle to transform public issues rooted in social and economic injustices into the private sorrows of individuals. It seeks to expose the limits of dominant discourses of resilience and develop a critique of such conceptions. An alternative conception of resilience is promoted which advocates a collective response to the challenges facing social workers.

Social Work and Resilience

The study into how social work students perceive resilience in their practice starts with an analysis of how resilience has become such a prominent feature for practitioners. In chapter two there is review of the literature on resilience and its application to practice (Collins 2017). The common theme that emerges is that resilience is characterised as the ability to develop adaptive emotional and psychological responses to stress. Although there is some recognition of the external pressures faced by social workers, the dominant view is that social work is an inherently stressful job for which resilience is key. Much recent research is centred primarily on identifying the 'ingredients' which constitute resilience and examining how they can be acquired, for practice (Kinman and Grant 2014; Greer 2016). The research field is dominated by positive and occupational psychologists, who draw upon models developed from fields such as business studies (Holroyd 2016). The claims made for resilience are that it will not only help overcome adversity but actively increase efficacy (Greer 2016).

Consideration is given to the growing criticism that resilience has attracted from social work academics. Primarily it is seen as a socially-blind model which pays insignificant regard to the structural context in which resilience is promoted (Garrett 2015:2018). Any recognition of environmental factors is limited to a narrow work-based context and its only significance is how the available resources, such as the availability of a mentor, can be useful to aid practice (Baker and Hall 2014). Dominant conceptions of resilience are seen as a means of limiting discussion on the nature of social problems that social workers encounter with their clients, as the focus is on symptoms of problems at the expense of causes (Mohaupt 2011). The tendency is to locate the

responsibility for addressing social problems with individuals and thus create normative values around identifying those who can cope better than others (Mohaupt 2011). This study extends and complicates such criticisms and locates resilience in the 'new spirit of capitalism' (Boltanski and Chiapello 2005). Resilience is described as 'ordinary magic' (Masten 2009), which is available to everyone inclined to develop the right skills. These skills are part of growing discourse of self- help which encourages a 'can- do' spirit of personal achievement. The 'new spirit of capitalism' co- opts the language and techniques of self-improvement to apply to the world of work and thus supposedly makes difficult working environments more palatable. For example, mindfulness is identified as a technique to enhance resilience (Parkes and Kelly 2014), but some advocates of mindfulness are dismayed that its application in workplace settings, such as education, has been denuded of its origins in Buddhist philosophy and so limited its capacity to challenge workplace orthodoxy (Hyland 2017). Instead a commodified '*McMindfulness*' (Purser and Loy 2013) has emerged which promotes

self -aggrandizement; its therapeutic function is to comfort, numb, adjust and accommodate the self within a neoliberal, corporitized, militarized, individualistic society based on private gain (Forbes 2019)

The above example is illustrative of a pervasive culture characterised as the 'wellness syndrome' (Cedarström and Spicer 2014). This is a culture dedicated to self-improvement and work is one area where techniques to be more resilient, more efficient and more productive can be applied. Work, according to such a discourse, is not merely to make a living, or provide a service, but is integral to personal development. These ideas also relate to social capital theory where acquiring resilience is a marketable commodity (Fleming 2017). Being resilience is demonstrated by working harder, longer and more diligently. Work becomes reconfigured as a means to improve oneself. However, it is also the way individuals can themselves be unwittingly exploited.

The second chapter concludes by locating the criticisms above within a radical social work context. Radical social work stresses that social work is a political activity inasmuch as social workers are uniquely positioned to see the interaction between the state and the most vulnerable in society (Ferguson et al 2018). It is argued that there is a historical tradition of social work committed to social justice that has been written out of the official story of social work. The Charity Organisation Society (COS), established in 1869,

transformed charitable activity into 'scientific' social work and promoted the assumption that poor people are inherently inferior and consequently incapable of leading meaningful lives. Such an approach was both elitist and punitive and sought to de-emphasise the significance of material context of poverty and deprivation (Ferguson 2008). Social justice is recognised as a contested term and is not necessarily accepted as an aspiration for all social workers (Davis and Garrett 2004), but from a Radical Social Work perspective there is a recognition that there is material inequality and a belief that social workers should concern themselves with reducing such inequality, and seek a redistribution of resources (Turbett 2014). Ferguson argues that:

Omitting to highlight the structural causes of 'private ills' leaves space for 'blaming the victims rather than addressing the problem (Ferguson et al 2018: 156).

Chapter two concludes by examining the possibility of a social justice of resilience. Social Justice is characterised as a commitment to

Challenge, critique and transform relations of oppression and domination that are embedded in social and political structures (Watts and Hodgson 2019: 180).

There is a nascent concept promoted called social resilience (Hall and Lamont 2013), and claims for a practice that challenges dominant neoliberal ideology (van Breda 2018). There are a few other researchers, most notably Michael Unger (2018), developing a social dimension to resilience, who promote the significance of social support. These ideas seek to offer an alternative to what is presented as a dominant individualised paradigm. Garrett, for example sees 'an evolving resilient paradigm', drawn from a mixture of positive psychology, human capital theory, ecological system theory and military strategic planning, all 'marinated within a neoliberal rationality (Garrett 2018: 149). He does nevertheless reflect on the possibility of an alternative concept of resilience that could offer a:

Counter hegemonic form of resilience potentially capable of destabilising and displacing dominant neoliberal accounts and narratives (Garrett 2018: 150).

However, Garrett concludes that the possibility of a radical concept of resilience is a forlorn prospect. The root problem according to Garrett, is that resilience is:

integral to the forces seeking to dilute opposition to neoliberalism...
The emphasis is on the agentic coping individual, located within
'given' social and political structures[which] undercuts any attempt
to reform resilience talk (Garrett 2018: 150)

Garrett invites others to open a discussion about whether resilience can be reconfigured to a less 'agentic' model and more akin to a radical perspective. This research seeks to provide such an approach.

Critical Investigation of Resilience

Current research into resilience and social work is largely from a positivist perspective, analysing resilience as an objective and observable entity, subject to empirical study. Resilience is studied in isolation from the wider structural context in which it is applied. This study, in contrast, allies itself with Mills' central argument that the pressing issue the sociological imagination must address is the relationship between private troubles and public issues:

Do not allow public issues as they are officially formulated, or troubles as they are privately felt, to determine the problems that you take up for study...Know that many personal troubles cannot be solved merely as troubles but must be understood in terms of public issues.....Know that the human public issues must be revealed by relating them to personal troubles- and to the problems of individual life (Mills 1959: 226).

This study seeks to disturb and challenge dominant discourses on resilience. In doing so it will draw upon the principles and methods associated with critical research.

Critical research has been described as 'politicised social research' (Humphries 2008: 104), as it views social structures as intrinsically oppressive, and maintained through political and economic power, supported by legitimizing strategies. These strategies, it is argued, should be made visible for examination in order to reveal the forms of oppression they support. The underlying assumption is that every form of social order entails some form of domination (Morrow 1994). In making visible the forces of oppression, critical research aspires to offer the opportunity for people to resist the forces of

domination and control. Critical research aims to be emancipatory and its central concern is to establish a praxis, not simply to show reality is understood, but how it can be changed (Saminathan and Mulvihill 2017).

A key feature of critical research is what Harvey describes as a 'critical - dialectical perspective'(Harvey 1990:1). Critical because it draws attention to power relations which shape social reality and dialectical because it seeks to analyse subjective and objective realities as being intertwined and mutually implicit. Resilience is conceived as having an objective, universal meaning but at the same time there is an application to specific contexts by dominant forces.

The research questions adopted examine the students' own perceptions, experiences and thoughts on resilience within the context of an economic and political context which has shaped the material conditions to which resilience is applied. The questions are:

- What does the term resilience mean to you, in relation to social work?
- What has informed your understandings of this? (an awareness of any research; policy developments; training/guidance on implementation, etc.)
- In what ways have you been required to demonstrate resilience in your practice?
- Why do you think resilience in social work practice is being promoted?
- To what extent do you believe that the promotion of resilience is helpful for social work practice?
- To what extent have you been provided with the opportunity to critique the promotion of resilience in social work practice?
- Is there anything else you would like to add about resilience in social work that we have not covered?

This approach facilitates an investigation into how and by whom resilience is defined, for what purposes it is applied and in whose interests it is applied. It begins to examine limits to the value of resilience as it is commonly understood, and whether a critical, social model of resilience could emerge as a viable alternative. These questions seek to identify the links of what Mills called 'co-ordinate points' between biography (students personal history), history (where notions such as resilience emerge) and society (contemporary institutions, such as university-based social work courses) (Mills 1959: 159). Mills saw knowledge and power as inextricably linked. Knowledge and especially the everyday, taken-for-granted tacit knowledge, can be used to co-opt the least powerful in society to share the goals and aims of powerful elites (Elliot and Lemert 2014). The researcher can lift the lid on what are often

presented as individual deficits and in doing so seek to emancipate individuals from oppressive ideas. In order to achieve this, it is necessary to locate ideas in their context rather than isolation.

Resilience in Practice

Chapter Four presents the research findings in detail. The findings are based on interviewing thirteen social work students who have completed their first placement setting and six practice educators who support students on placement. The method used was a semi-structured interview which allows a comparison of individual experiences but also a

back - and - forth movement between the topic [of resilience] and the political and human context in which [resilient behaviour], takes place (Humphries 2008: 106).

The initial questions focus on how and by what means the students, and their practice educators, understood the term resilience. Even the most ardent proponents of resilience in social work recognise that the 'sheer breadth of [its] characteristics indicates resilience cannot be easily defined' (Kinman and Grant 2014: 9) and so resilience is open to manipulation by those with powerful vested interests. The significance of language is discussed by Gerth and Mills (1954) who examine the complex interplay between social structures, such as workplace settings and individual identity. Language and more specifically key terms and jargon, such as resilience, are used to shape the internalised thoughts and values of employees. Workers find their sense of self being shaped by the workplace environment and its culture. Both the students and their practice educators shared similar understandings of resilience which tended to focus on functional requirements; in essence, students tended to see resilience as verb, something one 'did' as part of practice, rather than a quality that was acquired. This reflects how the majority of social work students and practice educators saw resilience as intrinsically connected to their work and did not, initially, question, how it had been defined, whose interests' dominant discourses of resilience serve.

The next question examines the purposes for which social work students needed to show resilience in their practice. This allowed the opportunity to link specific practice experiences students and their practice educators encountered, with the wider social and political context which shapes their work. Here, I sought to meet Mills' argument for research to look at things as part of a 'whole', that is within wider historical and political context. This

revealed a number of student social workers sought to develop a critique of the application of resilience for their practice. A number of them saw gaps between the material reality of their clients' lives and the demands made on them as social workers to be resilient in the face of such unfairness. Students were clearly affected by the poverty they encountered and they questioned the limits of resilience for their clients and themselves in seeking to help them. Similarly, a couple of practice educators were sceptical about its promotion as they saw the way resilience was understood in practice was a means to manipulate students to comply with unacceptable working conditions. In essence, resilience was seen as a means of stifling criticism; if there was any complaint then the students lacked resilience. They had to show the 'right' character. The way in which working practices can result in people constructing a personality type is also examined by Mills (1951) and Hochschild (2013), in the way employers maintain conformity.

The final section of the fourth chapter looks at possibilities for students to critique resilience. This facilitated the raising of the majority of students' awareness of the limits of resilience as it is commonly understood and how it is open to exploitation in practice. There is a recognition that resilience can be used to create normative standards by which student social workers can be judged as well as ignoring the social context in making sense of resilience (Garrett 2018). However, the majority of students, while rejecting the dominant view of resilience, began to formulate their own idea of resilience that sought to promote collective responses to what they saw as forms of social injustice. Although none of the participants explicitly linked their ideas to Radical Social Work, or Mills, they nevertheless articulated ideas similar in spirit to these ideas. Several students, and a few practice educators, placed a great value on supportive working relationships and networks. They saw resilience arising from helpful teams supporting each other in regards workloads, understanding demanding cases, but also seeking to improve resources for each other and service users. Such an idea could correspond to the nascent notion of social resilience which seeks to enhance resilience by developing collective responses to exploitative social conditions (Hall and Lamont 2011; van Breda 2018)

A Radical Resilience

The concluding chapter considers the possibility of a model of resilience which is consistent with the core principles of Mills and Radical Social Work theory. That is, a way of developing an understanding of resilience that is not focused simply on individual responsibility but rooted in a network of supportive

alliances. It is suggested this model of social resilience could be located within a new social care paradigm which emphasises the importance of revitalising human relationships that address human needs and enhance capabilities (Cottram 2018; Lent and Studdart 2019). Such a notion is considered an important aspect of a social work curriculum which should not only disseminate the current dominant notion of resilience and its attendant critique, but also promote the possibility of advancing a model of resilience that enhances social justice. Although social justice is a contested term (Watts and Hodgson 2019), the model cited here refers to reducing poverty and inequality arising from institutional and structural unfairness, and seeking to bring about redistribution of resources and opportunities (Jackson 2005). Moreover, drawing on ideas developed by Simmons and Smyth, (2018) the promotion of a socially just approach to resilience is offered.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Introduction

Resilience has been a significant feature of social work practice for many years (Saleebey 1997 2002; Howe 2008) but has recently become a prominent aspect of social work education (Kinman and Grant 2014). This arguably reflects a broader promotion of resilience as one of the defining features of contemporary life (Chandler 2014) and the answer to the prevailing social and economic challenges of our time (Rodin 2015). There is however a growing criticism of resilience, or more specifically, dominant notions of resilience which, it is argued, advocate individual responsibility for what are fundamentally structural problems, and thus serves to maintain economic and social inequality (Neoculous 2013; Diprose 2015).

This research seeks to investigate how social work students perceive resilience in their practice from a Radical Social Work perspective (Ferguson 2008; Ferguson and Woodward 2009); this is to say from an approach which locates the experience of student social workers within their material conditions that includes increasing tuition fees, growing restrictions on bursary support and more challenging work environments (Considine et al 2015; Considine et al 2015). It will utilise an interpretive approach as this perspective identifies the lived experiences, feelings and perceptions of the participants (Bryman 2011). This research will also consider whether there are opportunities to develop a more critical view of resilience instead of simply the promotion of individual self-reliance. Allied to this is an exploration as to whether an alternative model of resilience could be developed that fits with a Radical Social Work perspective of collective support. This chapter will analyse the emergence of resilience as a dominant idea in social work education and critique this development from a Radical Social Work perspective.

Resilience and Social Work Practice

Within the realm of social work, resilience has traditionally been associated

with the 'strengths-based approach' (Saleebey 2006; 1992), central to which is the notion that all experiences of trauma and adversity are potentially recoverable. Resilience is, in this context, characterised not as a disregard or discounting of '*life's pains*', but as the '*ability to bear up in spite of these ordeals*' (Saleebey, cited in Cree 2011: 187). It fits well with the current principles and values of the dominant framework defining social work practice (the Professional Capabilities Framework and Standards of Proficiency) which advocates practice that enhances growth and change in individuals, families and communities. It is presented as a highly influential and pervasive model (Collins 2017) and seemingly fits with the long-standing liberal Humanist tradition in social work (Payne 2011). It is said to be respectful of the individual and as promoting a collaborative approach with service users (Norman 2006). The College of Social Work, the former professional body overseeing the education and enhancement of social work practice, advocated the notion of emotional resilience as a core skill underpinning training programmes: trainee social workers should, it argued, '*become more confident, emotionally resilient and adaptable to the demands of social work*' (cited in Megele 2013: 1). The reasons for this are manifold: the development of resilience is said to help practitioners deal with what is recognised as a complex and emotionally demanding role (Lloyd et al 2002; Coffey et al 2004, Evans et al 2005); it is claimed that sustaining coping skills and inner strength could help off-set high levels of stress, poor retention and burn-out rates (Curtis et. al. 2009;); and that resilience can help improve retention rates for newly-qualified practitioners (De Parfilis 2008).

Beddoes et. al. (2013) offer a framework to help identify factors contributing to the development of resilience in social work students which they divide into three sections. The first relates to individual factors such as optimism in the face of adversity, effective coping skills and strategies (Collins 2009, Wilks and Spivey 2008) and taking care of oneself (Beddoes et al 2013). The second section identifies environmental and cultural factors, which include the characteristics of resilient, or adaptable skills (von Breda 2011) and workplaces that help support emotional wellbeing (Morrison 2007). The section identifies those individual skills that can be taught including mindfulness (Lynn 2009), developing empathy and reflection and supportive supervision (Grant and Kinman 2012, McAllister and McKinnon 2009). Subsequent studies have sought to explore how stress and adversity has helped the acquisition of resilience and the significance of understanding the acquisition of resilience as a process (Palme-Garcia and Mediatz 2014, Rajan-Rinkin 2013). The most comprehensive

study is by Grant and Kinman (2014) who provide an edited collection of essays which offer a range of methods and techniques in order to develop resilience. Greer (2016) also provides an instrumental guide as to how social workers can become resilient in their practice via a range of cognitive exercises promoting positive thinking.

Defining Resilience: the dominant model.

In some ways, the meaning and definition of resilience would appear to be fairly straightforward. Resilience originates from the Latin *resiliere* which means to rebound or recoil and is based the prefix 're' which means back and 'salire' which mean to 'jump or leap'. The definition is not exclusive to individuals, nor is it the preserve of beings; it can be applied to groups, organisations and physical properties. Where it becomes problematic is that, as Garrett argues, it is a protean and rather '*promiscuous*' term available to sources as disparate as the military and the world of science and architecture as well as social work and other areas of the public services (Garret 2015: 2). Garrett also notes that resilience appears to have established itself in social work as a seemingly radical and developmental concept via the 'strengths-based model' of support as noted above, (Saleebey 2002). This approach challenged medical-based problem-focused diagnoses and sought to promote a more holistic assessment which identified positive sources of development as well as problems. Garrett also notes how a particular model of resilience is being monopolised by certain strands of 'positive psychology' (Seligman 2002). It is noted that, although resilience is characterised as a 'multifaceted' and 'complex social construct' (Kinman and Grant 2011: 262), it is generally framed within the realm of individualized personality traits and competences. What is excluded is the notion of communal support and shared responsibilities, as well as the causes of the events which actually cause trauma and distress for the individual and society more broadly.

Grant and Kinman (2015) identify seventeen qualities which allegedly constitute resilience: these include intrinsic and extrinsic factors such as emotional wellbeing and peer support. They also consider the proposal by Ungar and Leibenberg (2011) that, rather than have a catch-all definition, resilience could be bespoke and context specific. Kinman and Grant note that the '...sheer breadth of these characteristics indicates resilience cannot easily be defined' (2014: 19). Kinman and Grant nevertheless offer a summary of what they believe characterises resilience:

Resilience typically arises from successful adaptation to everyday demands rather than unusual ones and from ordinary rather than extraordinary human capabilities. Resilience is a quality that can be developed, but a supportive and nurturing working environment is required whereby social workers are given time, resources and professional development opportunities (2014:30 op cit.).

This definition refers to both the individual and social context in which resilience operates. Resilience is presented as a democratic quality as it is attainable for all and has universal applicability. There are implicit and recurring themes emerging here. Arguably the key verb is adaptation which occurs frequently in Kinman and Grant's studies; the emphasis therefore is on the individual to be flexible and adaptable. In as far as promoting a supportive environment it is in relation to supporting and facilitating the opportunity for introspective change which leaves the external causes of stress unchallenged. Arguably this definition of resilience fits comfortably within a neoliberal framework; it is largely individualistic and has the capacity to create normative values between those who successfully acquire resilience, and those who do not. It also creates a diversion from thinking about any broader structural inequalities. The emphasis is on the individual and how they learn to adapt rather than the structural causes and forces rendering such adaptation necessary.

Traynor (2017) questions whether the way resilience is commonly defined is flawed. First, he says most studies in resilience attempt to deal with the conundrum that some individuals seem less damaged by adversity than others. This approach is to construct a definition of what resilience is and then utilise measuring instruments to identify the components which constitute attributes of resilience. The definition and constituent elements of resilience, such as intelligence, are constructed in such a way that the scientific measures used to ascertain these qualities, always reaffirm, rather than prove what resilience is, and what it is made up of. It is essentially a circular definition (Traynor 2017: 25). Resilience, says Traynor, can be seen as metaphor in order to explain the mystery of why some seem to cope better than others. Metaphors, according to Lakoff are 'mental structures that shape the way we see the world' (Lakoff 2016: xi), and as framing devices can shape how we assess the world. The dominant view of resilience, according to Traynor, is the plucky individual overcoming adversity to achieve their goals and it is the stuff of the American Dream and Hollywood movies. In seeing resilience in this way the

individualistic nature of its character can be challenged. It is a metaphor several students and a few practice educators challenged as they sought to reconfigure resilience as personal ability and around more supportive relationships.

Second, research into what resilience is involves asking professionals (such as social workers) to rate themselves in relation to various characteristics which then proves what constitutes resilience (Adamson et. al. 2014). This approach tends to reinforce the view that resilience is important but what social workers identify as resilience could be examples of other qualities which are significant to them, but may not be applicable to other workers. Although there is some research on how organisations can support resilience, they tend to focus on the individual rather than the context. Traynor makes the point that if teams are struggling to cope it could be seen as poor recruitment of non-resilient staff rather organisational failures.

Most research on resilience make little, or no reference to studies outside the profession under review. Resilience is presented as a key competency and reinforces a view that those who stay in the profession are resilient and those who leave are not. In essence: the concept, or construct of resilience does not explain why some individuals seem less permanently damaged by adversity than others. Resilience is not a kind of good that you can obtain in a market. It is simply the label applied to describe the outcome of the operation of an array of characteristics and contextual features (Traynor 2017: 25).

This notion of resilience can be seen as part of a broader development of what has been called the 'well-being syndrome' by Cedarström and Spicer (2015) who examine the ideology of what they see as the 'wellness culture' and some have argued has merged seamlessly with the requirements of the free-market philosophy (Hochschild 2012). For example, they examine how developments in positive psychology and therapeutic fashions, such as Mindfulness, have become increasingly utilized as a means of creating a culture of self-improvement in the pursuit of improved effectiveness within a competitive and stressful work environment. Learning to master oneself, such as through developing adaptable thinking skills, is supposedly instrumental in being more effective and productive. Resilience is presented as the answer to managing and overcoming the effects of stress as well as requiring introspection and critical self-development. The emphasis on self-development, can, according to Cedarström and Spicer, lead to a paradox, as they argue that in seeking the answer to the demands of work and life within ourselves has no end: 'What is crucial is not what you have achieved but what you can become. What counts

is your potential self, not your actual self' (Cedartström and Spicer 2015: 21). The self, or the potential self, becomes a project in itself. They cite the philosopher Simon Critchley, who describes this culture as producing a 'passive nihilist', someone whose only belief is centred on the self and self-improvement (Critchley 2007: 8).

Cedarstrom and Spicer's analysis offers an illuminating comparison with Elizabeth Harrison's study (2013) on resilience and community development which notes that social crises were reconceptualised as opportunities and poverty described in official reports as vulnerability. Dealing with problems was all about re-framing the situation as individualistic and potentially positive. This is most starkly expressed by Palme-Garcia and Hambrados-Mendiatz who conclude there was a logical benefit to the continued stress that social workers are exposed to both externally (structural inequalities and lack of social status) and intrinsically (social work is characterised as a conflictual role). The authors argue, '...our results confirm that adversity can be perceived not only as source of distress, but it can also be used to become stronger' (Palme-Garcia and Hambrados-Mendiatz 2014: 394). The challenge is to make the increasing stress levels a seemingly acceptable proposition: this can be achieved within the 'new spirit of capitalism' (Boltanski and Chiapello 2007).

Characterising Resilience: the 'New Spirit' of Capitalism

The methods and techniques advocated in Grant and Kinman (2014) collection of essays represents the most comprehensive attempt so far to state how resilience in social work can be achieved. What is presented appears to be an amalgamation of positive psychology, self-help therapy, eastern ideas and aspects of current business practice. We are invited to view the variety of methods on offer as a 'toolkit' where different techniques can be employed in different situations. There is no one model but rather an opportunity for social workers to discover the method(s), or tool(s) that work for them. There is advice on how social workers can achieve a better work-life balance, or what is claimed to be a 'work life-fit' (op. cit., 2014 p. 34). It is argued that the conflicting demands and impact of work and life events cannot be balanced but can, perhaps, be fitted together. The key to this is for social workers to apply strategies that help them recognise their own particular 'work-life' needs and begin to develop a perspective on how they manage the demands of work and life. This, according to Grant and Kinman, is achieved by utilizing a range of skills and abilities including time-management, cognitive-behavioural therapy, mindfulness, critical reflection and reflective supervision, as well as peer support and coaching. A work environment which facilitates and enhances the opportunity to develop these abilities is equally stressed as important.

Wray and Rymell (2014) guide on personal organization and time management draws on ideas utilized in the corporate and business world in order to meet personal goals and targets. These include activities such as identifying 'time stealers', keeping time diaries and using SMART objectives. Psychological flexibility is the key theme running throughout the guide. Peer support and peer coaching (Baker and Jones 2014) provides a way of formalizing a working relationship with colleagues which offers a way of establishing new thinking and working patterns. Another way to improve 'psychological flexibility' is through the use and application of cognitive-behavioural -based strategies which allows one to achieve resilience by learning to think differently (Alexander, et al 2014).

Mindfulness is also advocated as means of achieving resilience through altered perceptions (Parkes and Kelly 2014). Mindfulness has become a ubiquitous method in stress management and is now a prevalent feature in the corporate world. It offers a means by which events can be viewed in 'an objective and detached manner...' (*op. cit.*:120) and, although it does not eliminate stress it is claimed to help people to 'relate to it in a different way' (*op cit*: 126). The use of reflection and reflective supervision it is argued, is the key tool to help social workers deal with the emotional demands of the job and learn to develop a more adaptable and amenable outlook (Grant and Brewer 2014). It is also recognized that organizations have a part to play in providing an environment that allows such skills and abilities to flourish. But a great deal rests upon the individual to enhance their own self-knowledge, coping skills and stress resistance (Kinman and Grant 2014). The kind of knowledge and skills required can range from using appraisal to address factors affecting wellbeing to learning how to implement 'stress inoculation training' (SIT) (Kinman et. al: 166). Here stress is regarded as an infectious disease which can be guarded against if individuals take responsibility to protect themselves.

Arguably the methods proposed above exemplify the embodiment of the 'new spirit of capitalism' (Boltanski and Chiapello 2005; 2007), which Garrett (2013; 2014) argues is apparent in the emergent management culture colonising social work. My research draws upon his observations to show how the emergence of resilience together with attendant programmes of development, embodies this spirit in terms of its seductiveness in offering a supposed solution to the increasingly demanding social work environment.

Boltanski and Chiapello offer a detailed analysis of the shifts and developments in capitalism from what is termed the Fordist model of the 1930s to the more

individualized and supposedly less-hierarchical practices in contemporary capitalism. They identify how capitalism needs to find mechanisms through which to reinvigorate itself and articulate '*legitimising principles*' (2005: 487). This, they argue, is necessary in order to develop a series of 'moral justifications' (2005:10) which persuade people to believe there is a personal investment in work other than simply the profit motive. In doing this the capitalist system manages to 'sustain the forms of action and predispositions compatible with the capitalist order', and so maintains, 'adhesion to a lifestyle conducive to capitalism' (2005: 9-10). Boltanski and Chiapello argue that this is achieved by co-opting and absorbing ideas and that were originally developed as critique of capitalism, thus creating a 'new spirit of capitalism'. This, they argue, is characterized by notions of individuality, creativity, reactivity, and personal development.

It is a world presented as fluid, 'switched- on' and ever changing/evolving. Cedarström and Spicer (2015), in their study noted above, draw upon the 'new spirit of capitalism' to show how contemporary working practices, such as zero-hours and time-limited contracts are framed within working culture as part of a 'liberated' and 'dynamic' world of personal enterprise. For example, it is recorded that there has been a growth in mindfulness-based initiatives in education as well as other workplace settings (Hyland 2017). Mindfulness, it is argued has been denuded of its traditional Buddhist values and repackaged as a faddish gimmick and thus earning the claim of McMindfulness (Hyland 2017). Headspace, a silicon-based company promoting a mindfulness app is worth around 250 billion dollars (Forbes 2019). Ironically, it is noted that that the Buddhist origins of Mindfulness does offer potential for genuine social change as well as individual reform but it is being adapted to accommodate capitalist working practices (Hyland 2017).

Garrett (2013) indicates how the 'new spirit of capitalism' has begun to be woven into the working culture and practice of social work management. First, drawing upon the analysis of business guru, Tom Peters (1993) as cited by Boltanski and Chiapello (2007), Peters argues that contemporary business culture emphasises the need for flexibility and '*obsessive attention to adaptation*' (Garrett 2013 p.190), a recurring theme in all the methods discussed above. These ideas are framed within the language of social capital theory which, it is argued, has become a dominant idea in working cultures (Fleming 2017).

The origins of social capital theory can be traced back to Adam Smith who, in his primary conceptualisation of capitalism said people could be possessors of

'useful abilities and talents' (Fleming 2017: 174). From the 1950s onwards, a small number of economists Schultz (1961), Lucas (1988) and latterly Becker (2008), formulated their own notion of social capital theory wherein people invest in themselves to improve their marketable skills and enhance their economic value. Social capital, it is argued is presented as a social classification that transcends all other typologies such as class, occupation and social status (Fleming 2017). The shift from large-scale industrial economies to more flexible and individualised working practices introduced the spirit, if not always the practice, of social capital theory. In the 1990s advocates of social capital theory promoted influential notions such as 'employee security' (Drucker 1993: 20) and as 'liberation management' (Peters 1999: 104). This shift, it is claimed, marked a cultural shift from a collective sense of working to the individual employee as a brand, in competition with other employees as a valuable commodity. It created what Fleming called 'ultra- responsible autonomy'(Fleming 2017: 185): at its most extreme workers are on their own in showing they have the qualities to maintain their jobs. Such a model, it is argued, fits easily with a neoliberal model of deregulated work, characterised by excessive overtime and unpaid work (Fleming 2017).

Some conceptions of resilience correlate to social capital theory. The ability to manage seemingly unaffected by traumatic events, poor working conditions and increasing demands from employers can be seen as a prized commodity for the agency. It could be argued that Mills anticipated the significance of work as a means of shaping the values and beliefs of individuals so they become compliant with employers' demands (Gerth and Mills 1954; Mills 1955). Similar processes have been identified latterly as a 'new spirit' of capitalism with claims that work can be seen as form of personal development rather than exploitation (Boltanski and Chiapello 1993). A dominant neoliberal conception of resilience could, arguably, be seen as the personal reward from enduring the rigours of unpalatable working experiences.

Social workers are obliged to spend their careers in a continual process of learning to alter their perceptions (Thompson 2015) change their thinking patterns (Glasby and Dickinson 2015) improving their meditation skills (Thompson 2013) and being continually self-analytical to improve these skills (Schon 1983). The focus is on individual changes rather than challenging the environment that requires one to make these adjustments. The promotion of '*internal dispositions...consistent with the firm's general project*' (Boltanski and Chiapello 2005: 90) creates a shift of control from external hierarchical systems to self-control and self- management. The responsibility to acquire and enhance resilience falls on the individual although one can utilise the support

and guidance of others within the context of supervision and peer coaching. These are all in the service of encouraging the individual to focus on their own shortcomings and improve their effectiveness. This also creates a set of normative values in judging workers between those who are thriving and those who are not. Those who are struggling to manage their time, meet deadlines or who feel overburdened by growing workloads are then exhibiting symptoms of personal failure, in the 'new spirit of capitalism':

neo-management is filled with exceptional being: proficient at numerous tasks, constantly educating themselves, adaptable, with a capacity for self-organization and working with very different people (Boltanski and Chiapello 2005: 76)

Apparently resilient people can be deployed to cultivate the less exceptional with the result that:

skills management is...a key issue, and some new professions are conjured into existence, like the 'coach', whose role is to supply personalized support, making it possible for everyone to develop their full potential (op. cit.: 76).

Resilience thus becomes institutionalized as matter of personal responsibility. This presents itself in what could be termed the 'seductive aspect of neo-management', whereby people should, 'develop themselves personally' as this will 'appeal to all the capacities of human beings who will be in a position to fully blossom' (Boltanski and Chiapello 2005).

One way this manifests itself is through training guides and policy initiatives: the (now defunct) College of Social Work, advocated the notion of emotional resilience as a core skill underpinning training programmes: trainee social workers, it claimed, should 'become more confident, emotionally resilient and adaptable to the demands of social work (cited in Megele 2013). *Community Care*, the social work journal organized a conference entitled, *Protecting the Frontline against burnout: creating cultures to promote resilience and well-being for social care and health professionals*. Subsequently, the journal issued a free toolkit advising social workers how to improve their emotional resilience (Silman 2015). This is an abridged version of Grant and Kinman's ideas cited above. There is also a handbook freely available online called, *Supporting emotional resilience within Social Workers* (Fox, Leech and Roberts 2014). Similarly, in response to a survey run by *Community Care* which showed 2000 social workers feel moderately or very stressed by their role (Shraer 2015), one

solution proposed was 'restorative supervision' to aid personal wellbeing and resilience (Wallbank 2016). Such guides may be well intentioned but they nevertheless create a cumulative effect of promoting individualised responses to what could well be structural causes of stress and distress.

Critical Perspectives on Resilience

Two of the most prominent challenges to official discourses of resilience are Diprose (2015), who examines how resilience is deployed within youth work, and Garrett (2015), who focuses on social work practice. Both offer similar arguments which can be adumbrated as follows:

- Resilience is presented as a socially blind model which places responsibility on the individual for managing adverse effects of social inequality;
- Resilience can be deployed as a means of extending social control. It can be used to create a 'blame culture' - those who are struggling to cope are lacking resilience - and those who do manage held to fit a normative standard that the rest ought to achieve;
- Resilience fits largely with a neo-liberal world view which undermines collective responses to social challenges, and presents resilience as an act of personal opportunity to overcome the challenges of social inequality;
- Resilience is a politically loaded term, carrying with it a host of unacknowledged and unexamined assumptions and beliefs.

Both authors consider whether resilience can be reclaimed within a more radical political context which would allow for a more critically-informed social model of resilience to prevail. Diprose draws upon the work of Cindi Katz (2004) who examined the consequences of dramatic economic change on the lives of young people in Harlem, New York and Howa, Sudan. Katz sought to show how young people from these communities could off-set the worst effects of social deprivation by working to support each other and so enhance the resilience of the social group (cited Diprose: 47 op.cit.). However, in analysing the way resilience has been appropriated by the (then) coalition government to the response in the UK to the 2011 riots, Diprose comes to the conclusion that resilience has been co-opted so firmly

within a neo-liberal agenda that it negates the opportunity to use resilience to advance social change: Garrett also considers whether:

resilience 'talk' could be re-cast in a more progressive way...
research could conceivably be rerouted in the direction of a more
critical social work education (Garrett 2015: 17).

However, Garrett also argues that the dominant 'resilient' paradigm is so rooted within the neo-liberal discourse and so suffused with its emphasis on 'agentic coping individuals' (Garrett:2015: 13) that it is not possible to countenance a collective approach.

Social Resilience: restating the social in Social Work.

Some who promote the dominant model of resilience recognise that at least some social context does need to be considered. Kinman and Grant (2011) state that:

The risk of relying on interventions that focus attention on the nature of the individual social worker and their psychological characteristics without managing the structural causes of stress is clear...Even the most resilient social workers will be unable to thrive under the working conditions that are pathogenic...The concept of resilience is useful, however...as it[aims]to enhance the well-being of employees rather than merely focusing on reducing distress...
(Kinman and Grant 2011: 272)

Although it is acknowledged that structural context is significant in limiting the utility of resilience, there is still the claim that resilience is useful in these circumstances; even if one acknowledges structural factors, political aspects can be glossed over in order to restate the case for resilience as an important feature for practice. However, this is challenged by a nascent model of resilience which places communal support above individual endurance and may offer an alternative to Garrett's critique that the notion of resilience is too embedded in an individualistic world view.

Social resilience is a multi-dimensional concept but at its core is a belief that, 'the capacity of groups of people bound together in an organisation, class, racial group, community, or nation to sustain and advance their wellbeing in the face of challenges to it' (Hall and Lamont 2011: 2). Hall and Lamont promote a critical assessment of the hegemonic values and beliefs associated

with neoliberalism, and argue their definition is consistent with a radical social work perspective. Citing the work of Siva (2012) and Sharone (2013), Hall and Lamont challenge the prevailing message that working-class individuals need to learn how to be resolute in the face of increasing structural inequality, and instead, *'look for institutional and cultural resources that underpin resilience in the wider social environment'* (3 op.cit). The authors advocate examining ways in which change can be enacted at the micro, meso and macro levels of society as well as the ways in which shifts in one area can affect changes in the other. This involves challenging the 'collective imaginary' (4 op.cit.) of individualism and self-interest, and advocating more collective responses. This however is not an easy task, as Bourdieu notes that neoliberalism

it is a 'strong discourse'...so strong and so hard to fight because it has behind it all the powers of a world of power relations' (1998: 30).

In the realm of social work:

While many social work service users face increasing poverty, inequality and marginalisation, social workers now struggle more than ever to retain their commitment to working within the 'social' as well as the 'individual' (Ferguson and Woodward 2009: 35).

Social resilience is fundamentally a challenge to this process of social disaggregation; it seeks to generate a principle of commonality and co-operation in securing beneficial social outcomes. Social resilience requires a self-reflexive analysis of dominant hegemonic notions related to neoliberalism and would involve critically assessing resilience in ways such as Garrett (2015) and Diprose (2015) have identified. These authors, and others (Neocleous 2010; Harrison 2013) have identified the political and ideological framework which informs the dominant model of resilience, likening it with the principles of neoliberalism and as instrumental in maintaining the political and economic status quo. Indicative examples of how this model could be incorporated into practice could include the social model of support offered by Ungar (2015) which, although critiqued by Garrett (2015), offers a nascent possibility of securing material resources, and resilient therapy, in which Hart, Blinco and Thomas (2007) identify the material conditions which shape clients' lives as the fundamental basis for all subsequent therapeutic work. It is emphasised that it is not simply a matter of 'factoring' in social deprivation as an item to be 'managed' in the realm of promoting resilience but requires a commitment to challenge the structural forces that create, 'disadvantage, discrimination and

oppression' (2007:43 op. cit.). They state a claim between material conditions and being resilient.

Social Work and Social Resilience

The case for a social model of resilience is promoted by van Breda (2018). He argues that there is a wider tradition in social work which links the individual to the social context. This can be traced back to the 1920s and is referred to as the 'person-in-environment' model of social work (Richmond 1922).

The 'person-in-environment' approach seeks to focus on the tension between the individual (or a social system, such as a family) and the structural/social environment which surrounds that person, or family (Weiss-Gal 2008). On this basis social work can and does adopt a dual commitment to both agency and structure (van Breda 2018). This aim is recognised in the global definition of social work:

social work engages[both] people and structures to address life challenges and enhance wellbeing (International Federation of Social Work 2014).

A number of researchers have sought to develop a model of social work that seeks to bridge micro and macro interactions in order to achieve social development. One example is Frost (2008), who developed a psychosocial model which allows a holistic view of:

the 'subject' within, saturated by, reflecting of and influencing, imputing and imputed by... their social world' (Frost 2008:245).

Several writers have developed an 'ecological model' of resilience in which resilience is recognised as a quality emerging from multiple layers of systems and social structures, such as poverty and inequality. Rather than focus on individual qualities, they recognise the role played by the social environment in facilitating wellbeing, and the need for social workers to intervene across the micro and macro continuums (McGrubbin et al 1996; Fraser 2006 and Greene 2006). The most influential proponent of an ecological model of resilience is arguably Michael Ungar (2012, 2013). Ungar defines resilience with an emphasis on the environment to support individuals and groups, as well as the individual's ability to access them to sustain their wellbeing. Although Ungar does recognise individual agency he nevertheless places greater emphasis on environmental factors in order to explain the differentials in resilient outcomes (Ungar 2012). This use of social ecology theory relocates resilience from the

arena of the of the individual's inner qualities to the social environment and its ability to promote human flourishing (van Breda 2018).

Bottrell (2007) argues that resilience is not just about drawing on the resources that are available but that is also about resisting negative forces in the environment. In this context resilience is defined as:

practices which empower opposition to rules and norms in specific contexts and which contain critiques of social relations, from the lived experiences of marginalisation (Bottrell 2007: 599).

Some of the student social workers who took part in my own research offered their own examples of this approach to resilient practice. Deborah, for instance, identified ways she could interpret eligibility criteria to facilitate access to resources for her client group. Noreen also described how she would be an advocate for her clients in challenging operational and administrative decisions in relation to housing and related benefits. She felt she had to challenge what she saw as institutional 'norms' to enhance wellbeing. Bottrell, though, does emphasise the responsibility of the individual, both worker and client, to resist oppressive social forces. In other words, the approach does not necessarily promote social activism or political conscientization, but rather a focus on specific and local issues to be challenged (van Breda 2018). However, this is an approach to resilience which moves away from simply coping with adversity to one that seeks to make some change to the environment.

The ideas of Bottrell have been developed by Hart et al. (2016), who defines resilience as:

overcoming adversity, while also potentially changing, even dramatically transforming (aspects of) that adversity (Hart et al 2016:3).

An example of a socially transformative notion of resilience is provided by researchers in New Zealand whose studies on the way marginalised youth were assessed for access to resources, brought about changes to assessment process so that young people had better opportunities to acquire help (Sanders and Mumford 2014 and Mumford and Sanders 2015). The above examples do suggest a more radical perspective to resilience and its application in social work practice. This can be examined further in light of Mills' own proposal for what characterises transformative practice, along with the arguments from a radical social work viewpoint.

Bywaters (2009; 2018) and Krumer-Nevo (2015) have argued respectively for social work to reconfigure its scope and purpose in addressing inequalities and poverty. For Bywaters, social work should follow health and education in developing an inequalities discourse as this would be consistent with its long-standing concern with social justice and fairness. (Bywaters 2009). In the area of child protection, an inequality discourse could help identify causation in child maltreatment, the role wealth plays in protecting both parents and children alike from scrutiny and how harm and abuse is framed. It could also help develop child protection practices which help ameliorate rather than replicate or exacerbate existing inequalities (Bywaters et al 2019). Dominant discourses of poverty are challenged by Krumer-Nevo by his poverty-aware social work paradigm (PAP) (Krumer-Nevo 2015). The PAP model is based on three theoretical and ethical premises:

1. Poverty is seen as a violation of human rights thus values the agency of service users in their resistance to poverty. This also challenges a Conservative perspective of poverty which frames it as a product of individual failings.
 2. Views professional knowledge on poverty and practice emerging from a dialogue between worker and the service user. Establishing a close personal relationship is core component of the paradigm.
 3. The social worker stands by people in poverty and represents knowledge and advocacy of their service users to a wider society.
- This approach allies itself with Structural explanations of poverty as arising from social inequality but seeks to go further in promoting resistance to the causes of poverty. The focus on a real- life context and addresses both material and emotional needs (Krumer-Nevo 2015).

Resilience and Radical Social Work

Hart et.al. argue that:

Resilience stems in part from the capacity and opportunity to understand the role of adversity to one's life and the role of individuals and groups to challenge systems of inequality and discrimination (Hart et.al. 2007: 2).

These authors suggest what type of support could be offered to improve the social circumstances of their clients, which includes help with accommodation, advocating for entitlement to benefits, and promoting local support networks.

For them, being socially resilient is inextricably bound-up with social justice, a perspective which resonates with Radical Social Work.

Although there is no one single definition of Radical Social Work it is fairly well represented by the following description:

It rests on an analysis (essentially a Marxist one) that considers that western capital societies are based on the exploitation of working classes by a ruling class whose ideology is accepted: rule and exploitation are by consensus rather than by coercion, with social work playing a part in that process (Turbett 2015 xvi).

Mainstream social work focuses mainly on supporting individuals to cope better under their existing social circumstances, whereas radical social work concerns itself with the ‘... structural roots of its respective clients’ problems and should challenge the oppression that they experience ...’ (Ferguson and Woodward 2009:3). It promotes activism and collective responses to social problems by raising the consciousness of its clients in relation to social injustice and supporting ways to challenge it (Bailey and Brake 1975). Radical Social Work would therefore reinstate politics which has been basically ‘written out of the history of social work’ (Ferguson and Woodward 2009 :21). Radical Social Work is generally considered to have emerged with the publication of Bailey and Brake’s book of the same name in 1975 and the left wing inspired ‘Case Con’ which challenged the principles underpinning a state-run social work organisation (Weinstein 2011). Following a gradual decline in the 1980s and 1990s, a revised Radical Social Work movement emerged with the launch of the Social Work Action Network in 2004 by key thinkers and activists such as Banks (2014); Beresford (2014); Ferguson and Lavalette (2014); Garrett (2013) and Jones and Novak (2014). However, as Ferguson and Lavellette (2007) argue, Radical Social Work has its origins in the early development of social work around the turn of the twentieth century.

The Mainstream History of Social Work

Most mainstream accounts trace the origins of social work back to key legislation such as the Speenhamland Act 1563 and the Poor Law 1601; the Poor Law Amendment Act 1834 and the establishment of the Society for Organising Charitable Relief and Repressing Mendacity in 1869 (the Charity Organisation Society (COS) (Pierson 2011; Bamforth 2015; Backwith 2015).

Conventional narrative identifies these developments as arising in response to social change resulting around growing levels of poverty (the 1563 Act, known as the Speenhamland Act, to support displaced farm workers at a time of agrarian revolution; the 1834 Act aimed to stop 'outdoor' relief and make workhouse the only option to address the effects of industrialisation and the rise of a new urban poor) and COS became an umbrella organisation establishing national principles for poor relief in England. The second feature is that these measures were introduced to quell social agitation. During the nineteenth century a proliferation of charities emerged for a number of reasons but most notable amongst them was from a fear of revolution (Fraser 1973, cited in Backwith 2015:6) and a growing fear of urban crime and industrial riots during the latter part of the century (Ferguson and Woodward 2009). The third and recurrent feature was to define poverty as arising from personal failings as opposed to structural factors; the rationale behind the Speenhamland Act was to ensure moral character by offering the barest support so the poor did not become lax (Boyer 1990); as for the 1834 Poor Law, one advocate of the Bill noted poor relief should only be provided for accidents and violent diseases, but all other contingencies, such as old age, illness, unemployment, should be catered for by the individual themselves (Turbett 2015). A concept of eligibility was introduced based on two principles- the moral purpose of charity was to promote self-help and that the poor are not helped by generous hand-outs but more through the reformation of character via appropriate interventions. It is the same theme of linking character and poverty as in previous policies: it was logically consistent that if character was related to poverty then it made sense to focus on reforming that person rather than alleviating material hardship per se:

There can be no doubt that the poverty of the working classes of England is due... to their improvident habits and thriftlessness. If they are ever to be more prosperous it must be through self-denial and forethought (Charity Organisation Review, 1881)

In focusing on individual circumstances and personal character, COS promoted the practice of personal assessments, detailed record keeping and the use of purposeful home visits to assess financial means and needs. It was as Bamforth notes, 'actively hostile to collective solutions to the problems of poverty' (2015: 7). Similar concerns over the use and application of charity were present here as in previous systems of support: concern that charity could have a negative impact on the market, the alleged corrupting effects of alms giving on moral character, the fear of creating welfare dependency (Ferguson

and Woodward 2009: 18). It is argued that these principles would be significantly informed by the spirit of Social Darwinism, with its positivist claim to a scientific explanation of the social order and its remedy (Powell 2009). Such a view would be asserted as the dominant position underpinning the role and purpose of social work over the twentieth century (Jones 1996).

The Radical 'Kernel' of Social Work

Ferguson and Lavelette (2007) argue that there are alternative visions of social work practice, largely hidden from history. They nevertheless offer a rich tradition which forms the basis of a radical perspective. One of the most notable examples of radical practice was Clement Attlee who, prior to being Labour Prime Minister had been a social worker. In his biography, Attlee provided examples of his, and others' practice in social work which sought to bring about social reform: this included providing soup kitchens, support for striking workers and the provision of free school meals. Other prominent examples include Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence, a prominent Suffragette, who worked as volunteer social worker in the East End of London in the early 1890s as part of a Methodist mission. Her work had similar methods and approaches to COS in that she engaged in detailed assessments and careful record keeping but differed significantly in focusing upon the social and working conditions of her charges as much as personal concerns.

Maude Royden who worked for the Liverpool Central Relief Society in the 1890s was critical of what she saw as the class snobbery which infused the seemingly benign values informing COS and challenged the validity of refusing material support for her patrons (Pederson 2004). Canon Barnett, a key figure in the Settlement movement, which pioneered community action to facilitate social reform, is generally seen as the second most influential element in the development of social work. Barnett founded Toynbee Hall in the East End of London in 1884 and in so doing could offer the benefits of education, and assisting impoverished young men (Powell 2001, cited in Ferguson and Woodward 2009). Toynbee Hall promoted the value of state aid rather than 'scientific philanthropy' of COS (Ferguson and Woodward 2009: 24). It resulted in a split between the Settlement Movement and COS in 1885 and provided a competing vision of social work: 'reform society rather than the person' (Mulally 1997: 24). This offered a 'clash between positivism and humanism, between those who advocated science and those who promoted social reform as an appropriate response to poverty' (Powell 2001 :34). However, this approach was marginalised for most of the twentieth century. Ideas from the field of psychotherapy and selective elements from sociology would inform

social work teaching for most of this time and reiterated individualised aspects of social concern (Pierson 2011). These psychological models were also useful at downplaying the need for economic reform during times of limited budgets (Jones 1996). The authorities major pre occupation would be ‘...enabling people to adopt to the status quo in more purposeful ways...’ (Dominelli 2002: 61).

More recent accounts of social work characterise it as balancing the demands of ‘care’ and ‘control’ (Parton 1996). On the one hand, social workers are there to provide help, support and facilitate change (Cree 2011) but at the same time need to consider risk and manage potential harm(s) (Kelmshall et al 2013). Social work is therefore seen as an ethical profession, weighing up complex decisions between what constitutes the ‘right’ action in promoting or denying opportunities for change (Fook 2007). However, as Ferguson and Woodward note, paraphrasing Karl Marx, social workers engage with service users but usually not in circumstances of their (social workers) own choosing. The structural and social context in which social workers operate – potentially limited resources, poor management support, lack of supervision- are often overlooked when things go wrong. Most Social workers, nevertheless, appear to value their role greatly but often encounter major difficulties in the face of structural constraints (Cree and Davis 2007; Doel and Best 2008). Radical Social Work would advocate that the profession should engage in a claim for social justice. This is the social worker as agitator.

A recent articulation of the social worker as agitator is formulated by the American social work academic James Midgely (2001:2014), who identified three key characteristics underpinning social work practice. These are:

1. Activist, which involves challenging the social and political context which shapes peoples’ lives (both workers and service users);
2. Remedial, which seeks to repair harm and can be considered for both individuals and communities, and
3. Developmental, which involves building new opportunities for both individuals and communities.

Midgley notes that the third approach has ‘not been a primary preoccupation in social work, the profession has since its early days advocated social reform and engaged in activist forms of practice’ (Midgley 2001:35). It is though, an aspect of social work that has been marginalised over the years and he recognises an entrenched debate between those practitioners who are hostile

to claims that social work should focus exclusively on therapeutic elements of practice, and 'social workers... committed to social activism often regard therapeutic practice as little more than a tool for perpetuating entrenched inequalities and supporting vested interests of elites' (Midgley 2001: 35). His proposal was a definition of social work that could accommodate both aspects and recognise that the needs of affluent middle-class westerners (such as in his native USA), are markedly different from those of developing world slum dwellers.

A vision of social work that embraces both the social as well as the individual is represented by the International Federation of Social Work's (I.F.S.W.) definition, which is also adopted by the British Association of Social Work (B.A.S.W.):

Social work is a practice - based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people. Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversities are central to social work. Underpinned by theories of social work, social sciences, humanities and indigenous knowledge, social work engages people and structures to address life challenges and enhance wellbeing (IFSW 2014).

Although Payne (2013) argues that the quest for a single definition of social work is illusory as there are a wide variety of approaches and perspectives, the above is broad enough to accommodate the radical 'kernel' as well as the individual approach. However, as we will see when examining the education of social workers, there is a continual effort to exclude social aspects and focus on narrow individual perspectives.

Radical Social Work from the 1970s

The first significant self-declaration of Radical Social Work is associated with the 'Case Con' group and associated publication, which ran from 1970 to 1977 (Weinstein 2011), the publication of Bailey and Brake's *Radical Social Work* in 1975, and a subsequent publication in 1980, *Radical Social Work and Practice*. Reflecting on the thirty-fifth anniversary of the publication of his co-edited text, Bailey said that his work offered two broad aims: one being:

to legitimise the notion that we could criticise the psychodynamic model or framework that dominated social work theory and practice (Bailey 2011: x)

And secondly, to offer an alternative approach to social work that sought to raise the consciousness of the service users about the structural causes of their disadvantage, and in so doing [raise]:

the idea that it was possible for people to resist being stigmatised by social services, and to resist poverty being blamed on poor people (Bailey 2011: x)

In order to understand the significance of these developments and their impact on subsequent practice it is important to locate Radical Social Work within its socio-historical context. The establishment of the welfare state after the Second World War engendered a growing confidence that social ills and public problems could be managed via appropriate administration. As Lavalette notes, it had encapsulated a 'third way' (long before New Labour used the term:2001: 2), between the anarchy of free market capitalism, as existed pre-war, and the authoritarianism of state socialism, as in Eastern Europe. The Keynesian economic model of counter-cyclical fiscal management, coupled with Beveridge's model of social welfare to eradicate the 'five evils' of want, squalor, idleness, poverty, and sickness, was central to a broad post-war political consensus (Tawney 1949/64; Marshall 1965 and Titmuss 1974). Within this context, social work was part of a social administration that, according to Weinstein (2011), constituted a quasi-profession and academic discipline that helped regulate the maintenance of a social order that was benignly held in check by the welfare state. The prevailing view was that the welfare system was working well, poverty was effectively being eradicated and so, during the 1950s and 1960s, social problems were often viewed as the product of individual maladjustment and psychological dysfunction. Although circumstances were different, social work occupied broadly the same terrain as that of COS in the late-nineteenth century: to assess and support the individual to adapt to the needs and requirement of society. Social workers were seen as a 'post political man' (Weinstein 2011:11) (the gendered aspect was also significant at this time as the role of women in the profession was less prominent).

The political and economic consensus was challenged by a series of events from the 1950s onwards. This included an emergent criticism of the welfare state as a means of maintaining and established social order (Saville 1957/58; Miliband 1969; Gough 1979 and Lavalette 2006). There was also 'rediscovery of the poor' (Woodward and Ferguson 2009 :22; Lavalette 2011: 2). Mainly though the pioneering work of Townsend from the mid-1960s

onwards (Townsend and Abel Smith 1966). Townend's research highlighted significant degrees of social and economic deprivation and was highly influential in developing both the concept and application of relative poverty. These studies further undermined contemporaneous complacency about the nature of poverty in Britain. The key point it highlighted was despite the safety net that the welfare state was claimed to offer, poverty had not been abolished (Kincaid 1973). Following the Seebohm and Kilbrandon Review of Social Work in 1968, there was an expansion in services which brought in a cohort of social workers from polytechnics and universities, influenced by more left-wing ideas. It instigated a more radical fervour to the culture of social work practice (Weinstein 2011).

The Case Con movement was the first significant outlet of a radical approach to social work.

The name itself was a provocation and a criticism, it played on the term 'case conference', the 'con' of groups of concerned professionals sitting around a table and reducing structural problems to individual 'cases', a form of victim blaming (Weinstein 2011: 13).

Case Con challenged established social work traditions and recast personal suffering as a result of social and structural inequality. It advocated a new way of working both personally and professionally and problematised dominant conceptions of professionalism as associated with the realms of formal power and careerism (Lavalette 2011). It sought a shared way of addressing social problems through raising the consciousness of participants so they could recognise the structural causes of their predicament (Bamforth 2015). These ideas were promoted through the magazine *Case Con*. Those they worked with were 'not clients but workers' (Simpkin 1979 :450). That is to say they were seen as oppressed and as part of the struggle to challenge oppression. Radical practitioners were scathing of individual case work and the bureaucratic nature of the Seebohm/ Kilbrandon reforms (they referred to them as 'Seebohm factories'). Contributors were exclusively practitioners and the tone and style of the magazine was mostly polemical. It advocated and reported on wide range of activist events which ranged from supporting striking workers, setting up tenants' associations, and promoting squatters' rights (Weinstein 2011; Jones 2011).

The publication of *Radical Social Work* arguably represents '...one of the few great, seminal texts of social work in Britain' (Lavalette 2011 1). Contributors to *Radical Social Work* addressed specific issues which had been part of an

internal debate within the Case Con movement and suggested new ways of working. One notable example was the role of a social worker in day- to-day practice, in particular what actually constituted a radical approach to supporting individuals and families on their own particular issues. For Case Con the whole approach of individual work was rejected in favour of collective action but Bailey and Brake argue that:

Our aim is not to eliminate casework, but to eliminate casework that supports ruling class hegemony. To counter the effects of oppression, the social worker needs to innovate a dual process, assisting people to understand their alienation in terms of their oppression, and building up their self-esteem (Bailey and Brake 1975: 9)

Bailey and Brake advocated an approach that maintained the self-respect of the individual client by recognising their immediate problems but also sought to raise their consciousness by helping them to locate their situation within a wider social and political context. This would sit alongside the activist approach involving trade unions, community groups and advocacy work around welfare rights. Conscious of the risk of patronising clients by indicating they had superior insights, or worse, unwittingly exploiting their difficulties for political action, Bailey and Brake advocated that 'social workers should start with their[clients] definition of the situation and their values, and then trying to extend these into a wider understanding of self and society (Bailey and Brake 1980:24). This approach would be instrumental in achieving the aim of translating,

our theories of society into a practice that at once helps and assists victims of our system, and simultaneously contributes to the creation of conditions which will transform our society into a socialist democracy (Bailey and Brake 1980: 13).

Geoffrey Pearson (1975) presents a critique of social work education and the need to address the practical reality of practice. He cites those who were new recruits to social work courses as well intentioned idealists and 'runaways from commercialism' (Pearson 1975:13). He identifies the difference between the aspirations of what newly -qualified social workers hope to achieve - an opportunity to make meaningful differences – and faced with the reality of practice that engenders a 'grief of failed hope' and 'bad promises'(Pearson 1975p.33/34).Pearson's own response to this professional disillusionment was to subvert the orthodox prescribed roles of state social work via acts of

‘individual rebellion, of professional sabotage and middle class banditry’ (Weinstein 2011: 22). Pearson’s critique resonates with a modern incarnation of radical social work in the development of the Social Work Action Network which in 2004 produced a manifesto based on reclaiming social work as a profession of social change with the slogan ‘We did not come into social work for this’ (Jones et al 2004). Similarly, one of the more recent responses to challenge what is seen as the increasingly authoritarian managerial culture defining current social work practice is met by a requirement to identify areas for subversion (Ferguson and Woodward 2009; Turbett 2015).

Radical Social Work eclipsed by Critical Social Work: 1980s

Although Radical Social Work declared itself in the latter part of the 1970s it was, as Lavalette points out (2011) a minority movement. Its influence and presence in social work offices was stronger in some areas than others (Lavalette cites London and Yorkshire as prominent examples) and Weinstein (2011) notes that social work offices were often characterised as having a ‘token red’. Also, Radical Social Work was not a homogenous movement but drew from a broadly Marxist and socialist strand as well as counter-cultural 1960s infused hippy culture, and an emerging feminist movement. It was though a movement united around two broad themes (Powell 2001): a transformation of social work practice through the involvement of social work clients in social change; and a critique of traditional social work practice which pathologised clients as being solely responsible for the difficulties they face (see Callinicos 2006).

The late 1970s also saw the rise of the ‘New Right’ and the emergence of neoliberal politics and economic practice in the UK and elsewhere. From the early 1980s onwards Radical Social Work became dissipated and social work in general was in retreat (Lavalette 2011; Ferguson 2008), as it was depicted by the New Right as associated with welfare dependency, political correctness, and being ‘soft on crime’ (Penketh 2011). Social work was portrayed as a ‘failed profession’ (Clarke 1993; Langdon 1993) associated with ‘failed hippy values’ (cited Weinstein 2011). Perhaps the most trenchant criticism of social work, and radical social work practice in particular, came from Brewer and Lait who observed it was created by ‘second-rate graduates in second rate sociology.....who were without defined jobs [and] not very busy’ (Brewer and Lait 1980 :109). A more sympathetic view of Radical Social Work saw it as well-meaning but overly ambitious in its aspirations: it sought to address ‘issues always too big for Case Con’ (Brown and Harvey 1987: 9) and set its aim of social reform/ revolution too high.

A more recent consideration of Radical Social Work offers a more ambitious claim for its legacy. Ferguson and Woodward (2009) argue that, whatever limitations may be made for its aims, it had a transformative effect on social work in three distinct ways. First, it transformed social work teaching as it introduced the significance of community-based work in promoting social solutions to individual problems. Second, it initiated the concept of collective responses to social problems and augmented the notion of social worker as advocate for welfare rights. Third, it helped transform the professional value base of social work as it instigated a culture of critical analysis of its own practice. This was evidenced in the promotion of a holistic based model which sought to place the support and welfare of the individual within their social context. A more interesting critique of the radical approach to social work came from those who were broadly sympathetic to its challenge to orthodoxy but questioned its ability to recognise alternatives to class based approaches. Mulally, a Canadian based social work scholar, acknowledged the usefulness of a Marxist dialectic in recognising contradictory aspects of society which are indicative of exploitation and alienation, but argued it could also be applied to other forms of oppression based around gender, sexuality and race (Mulally 1997).

Turbett (2015: 32-33) offers a summary of the distinction between Radical and Critical Social Work which can be summarised as follows. Both start with a recognition that individuals have limited control over their circumstances and are subject to structural forces; both advocate the need for action, or practice that is transformative and challenges dominant ideas. The central difference is that the Radical approach is rooted within a Marxist analysis, whereas the Critical approach is concerned largely with constructions of identity mostly separated from economic context and focused on language, dominant discourse and matters of identity. Woodward and Ferguson (2009: 29-30) see the critical perspective as being based largely on identity and difference detached from economic and political context. The characteristics of Critical Social Work and its critique from a Radical Social Work perspective will be discussed further in the next chapter.

The Dominance of the New Right

In the United Kingdom the emergence of neoliberal ideas is associated with Margaret Thatcher, although, as Bourdieu points out, '*Thatcherism was not invented by Mrs Thatcher*' (1998: 30). The antecedents of neoliberalism lie in the classical free market ideas of Adam Smith in the Eighteenth Century and, more latterly those ideas of Friedrich Hayek (1949) and Milton Friedman

(1962/1980). Its characteristic features consist of a commitment to a free market libertarianism; a belief in the rationality and sovereignty of individual over collectivism, and a decrease in state control in order to affect a less restrictive approach to market regulations. In effect, neoliberalism was an attempt to pull back the foundations of the welfare state and reconfigure society according to a competitive social order. There emerged an influential argument to apply market principles to state-run services such as health, education and social welfare in the alleged belief that this approach would make their provision more efficient in meeting individual need (Le Grand and Robinson 1984). The key characteristics of the neoliberal society are described as:

Low inflation, acquiescent industrial relations, freedom for capital to chase profitable opportunities without restraint", and, "domination of market - based solutions' as part of the economic landscape (Glynn 2006).

The New Labour regime of 1997-2010 did not significantly deviate from these principles. It promoted the notion of 'The Third Way' (Giddens 1998) which claimed to adopt an old style concept of social democracy (the principles of 'Old Labour' to meet the demands of a new global world: It was said that, 'public services need to modernize in order to compete within a global free market capitalism' (Miller 2004: 35). The principles of a market system were forced on the public sector and services such as social work were required to function as quasi businesses in a competitive marketplace.

The backdrop to all this has been the emergence of globalisation. Globalisation is a concept that is said to be difficult to define (Woodward and Ferguson 2009) but it has been characterised as:

A process of international exchange and integration involving increased economic activities, social interactions, political cooperation and improved communications (Midgley 2015: 232)

Its adherents claim that globalisation brings prosperity and potentially political emancipation through open markets and free trade (Friedman 1980), but its critics argue that it is essentially part of a neoliberal quest to seek new markets for capital accumulation (Harvey 2005). It is seen as a furtherance of rich countries seeking to exploit poor countries (Glynn 2006), a way of reducing individual and national sovereignty (Rapley 2004), new political fable to justify

claims for reducing public spending and maximising commercial profits (Beck 2000; Bourdieu et al 1998).

This analysis argues that the neoliberalism has had a significantly detrimental effect upon society generally, public services particularly and social work specifically

While many social work service users face increasing poverty, inequality and marginalization, social workers now struggle more than ever to retain their commitment to working with the 'social', as well as the individual (Ferguson and Woodward 2011: 35).

Neoliberalism has the power to control, shape and constrain the terms on which social issues and professional practice is framed.

Proponents of Radical Social Work argue that the effects of a neoliberal approach to managing society, and social work in particular, has been detrimental on the whole. Increasingly social work practice has to contend with the age of austerity (Turbett 2015). Featherstone, White and Morris (2014) in their study on children and families draw attention to increasing structural inequality as a central factor impeding parental capacity and sustaining child welfare. In relation to adult social care, Ferguson and Lavellette (2014) saw an on-going crises arising from a combination of cuts to resources and increasing marketization of services within an ideological framework of reducing public spending. Backwith (2015) argues the case for social workers to maintain an understanding of poverty as arising from structural inequality and not merely as a product of individual limitations as is the dominant political definition and befits a neoliberal principle of individualism. These developments are taking place within a broader austerity agenda; as Mason points out the real meaning of austerity is 'not...spending cuts, as in the UK', but, 'to drive down wages and living standards in the West for decades, until they meet those of the middle class in China and India on the way up' (2015; 4 - 5). Austerity is a social revolution which has several characteristics which drives major changes in society.

One of these changes is that markets colonise human relationships and diminish our social connections (Sandel 2012) and, as a consequence, one's identity and self-worth is bound up with market values of efficiency and effectiveness (Verhaeghe 2013). Recent studies into the effects of neoliberalism indicate that British society has become increasingly unequal in terms of wealth and life opportunities (Wilkinson and Pickett 2009). Critics of

neoliberal claims for increasing wealth via 'trickle down ', whereby wealth created by an elite eventually benefits all of society, has been called into question through lack of empirical evidence (Stiglitz 2011; Krugman 2012). It has seen the ideas of the 'underclass' (Murray 1994) and, more latterly Chavs (Jones 2011) and NEET (Simmons 2011) emerge which involves the individualisation of social problems. Neoliberalism assumes that these 'groups' are homogenous entities and their exclusion and marginalization is divorced from any broader social and structural factors. It is these very groups that tend to populate the workloads of most social workers.

The New Right Effects on Public Services

There have been various studies which examine what Ferguson and Woodward call the '*New Right assault on public services*' (2009: 40). The introduction of a purchaser provider model to social services created routinized and standardized working practices (Burgess 2004), larger workloads and a deskilled workforce (Lymberg 2004). It represents a retreat from the traditional focus on care and counselling and is more focused on '*cash and contracts*' (Ferguson and Woodward 2009).

Arguably, these changes have altered social work practice and processes and resulted in less time for workers to build up relationships as they find themselves under increasing forms of regulation and control (Harris 2003). The use of information technology has facilitated the implementation of managerial systems and allowed wider forms of monitoring and control. All of this contributes to a growing sense of disillusionment evidenced by various studies undertaken in the first decade of the twenty first century. For example, Unison, the main trade union representing social workers, undertook research on children and family teams, and found low morale and decreasing levels of motivation (Unison 2003; 2010). Similarly, '*Community Care*, the social work journal for England and Wales, carried out a series of surveys which found practitioners were increasingly dismayed by business values in professional practice (Carson 2009a; Carson 2009b; Michel 2009). This reflected a growing sense of crisis within the social work profession and, according to Lavalette

the attempt to introduce a 'neoliberal' form of social work has in the long run, opened up such disillusionment and discontent within the profession that it has created a space for the rebirth of radicalism in social work (Lavalette 2011: 7).

The challenge for Radical Social Work is how to translate the interest in activism into practical activities. One response is that lip-service is paid to the

social inequality but compliance to the social system is adhered to (Pease 2013). The challenge for Radical Social Work is how to bridge the gap between social theory and the reality of frontline practice (Howe 2009).

Resurgence of Radical Social Work SWAN

Iain Ferguson makes a case reasserting the central importance of a Marxist based practice in his essay '*Why Class (Still) Matters*' (2011). He claims that Marxism offers a clear framework through which to understand the impact neoliberalism has had upon society and social welfare. This he argues, offers the most coherent and convincing explanation for unprecedented inequality and social division within developed countries. Such is the advance of neoliberalism over the previous thirty years or so, that Marxist perspectives have become marginalised and increasingly unpopular. One of the reasons for this is that middle-class values have been promoted as the norm and working-class status has been devalued. Just as radical social workers of the 1970s developed their own Marxist analysis in response to the situation they faced then, Ferguson locates the cause of oppression within the context of neoliberalism. This, it is argued, can account for both the experiences of those who make up a social work caseload and for the way that social workers are disempowered in regards their professional status. This is illustrated by the way the profession, along with other public service workers, is subject to managerialism, marketisation and performativity (Ferguson and Lavallette 2004). Radical Social Work also seeks to promote emancipatory practice. This means a practice that seeks to clarify the structural causes of individual suffering and develop strategies to challenge the origin of this distress. Ferguson argues that a radical perspective reclaims, or reasserts a 'real' or neglected aspect of social work practice. The focus then needs to be as much on challenging systemic flaws and not just helping the individual change.

Such ideas were first articulated by the Social Work Action Network (SWAN). Ferguson, along with Jones, Lavalette and Penketh produced a manifesto (Jones et. al. 2004) in response to what they saw as an on-going crisis within social work. At the heart of this crisis they argued was a growing disillusionment between the expectations of newly qualified and experienced social work practitioners who were motivated by broad principles of personal support allied with idea of social justice, having to adapt to a culture of targets and surveillance. The SWAN Manifesto made clear what they saw as being wrong with social work. It was:

shaped by managerialism, by the fragmentation of services, by financial restrictions and lack of resources, by increased

bureaucracy and workloads, by the domination of case management approaches within their associated performance indicators and by the increased use of the private sector (Jones et al 2004: 1).

They called for:

a... modern engaged social work based around such core anti-capitalist values as democracy, solidarity, accountability, participation, justice, equality, liberty and diversity (Jones et al 2004: 2).

Bamforth (2015) was critical of the claim associating capitalism as anti-democratic but noted that SWAN's principle objective was to offer a provocative critique of capitalism and inspire a more practical basis for radical social work practice.

The call for social activism offers a marked contrast to the promotion of resilience in social work discussed earlier. Ferguson and Woodward (2009) identify four ways in which Radical Social Work can be applied in practice. The first is characterised retaining a commitment to relationship – based practice that involves getting to know, working alongside, and helping campaign for and on behalf of clients. The maintenance of working relationship with the client is crucial and social worker seeks ways to develop a collaborative way of working with clients. This can involve working on negotiated interventions with clients and finding ways to relieve some of the stress experienced as a consequence of their social environment. The key point Ferguson and Woodward address here is the bridge between working with clients on individual and localised problems while actively campaigning for policy reform.

The second method for promoting radical social work practice is developing acts of small-scale resistance. Ferguson and Woodward identify two ways this can be done. One is to provide managers with well-documented evidence of unmet needs in order to highlight the consequences of lack of resources on clients' lives. This could also provide evidence that can be used as the basis for further lobbying and campaigning on behalf of the service for the community. Another way is to identify examples of how earlier interventions could have off-set much more serious problems. Again this would demonstrate how structural factors (such as limited access to support services) have exacerbated problems for individuals. These ideas can be related to the work of Michael Lipsky (1980), who studied the working practices of public workers in the U.S in

the 1970s and 1980s including social workers. Lipskey identified ways frontline workers could subvert the rules of their role which could have benefits for their clients. Lipsky argues that the merits of small-scale resistance to rule breaking and subversive discretion in the benefit of the service-user. This could involve interpreting the threshold for financial assistance in order to secure funding for clients in difficulties. He argued that discretion is always required in those areas where there are greater uncertainties, and which reflect the complex nature of societies.

Ferguson and Woodward argue the case for this kind of small-scale resistance on the basis that social work is characterised by balancing the demands of care and control. But in mediating these possible tensions, social work values are inclined to promote enhancing the wellbeing of clients rather than restrictive controls. Within this balance there is the opportunity for individual interpretations, although the opportunity for this within the constraints of state-sector social work is, they would argue, increasingly difficult.

One criticism of this approach is that social workers are bound by legal and statutory frameworks and that the scope for discretion is limited. Attempts to enhance individual needs to be carefully balanced with legal obligations (Howe 1999). This point was countered by Evans and Harris (2004) who argue that just as GPs and lawyers are bound by statutory frameworks, but find opportunities for individual interpretation, so social workers can legitimately develop interpretations of the law which can be applied in practice. They conclude that rules and laws always require some interpretation and in this respect there can be opportunities to advance the needs and benefits of the client.

The third element Ferguson and Woodward promote is the active involvement with service users and their respective carers. It is important that there is whole-hearted commitment to engaging with both service users and carers for a number of reasons. One is that the real needs and not just the assumed needs of clients can be met. Another, is that it is important to work in a shared and collaborative way with service users as there is an opportunity that their involvement can be utilised in order to shape the structure of services that are on offer. Finally, it is important that carers are not unintentionally exploited in supporting both the service user and client.

The fourth and final element relates to collective activities and political campaigning. It is in this area that the spirit of radical social work is perhaps

most animated. It is committed to challenging neoliberalism and fighting for social justice on an individual and local level, a point is articulated by Lavalette (2011):

Community-based strategies and group work clearly allow practitioners to 'collectivise' social problems and look at structural and oppressive features-the public causes- at the heart of the problems. But radical practitioners can also be involved in quality, supportive casework that involves advocating on behalf of, alongside, service users...how they fight for service users' rights and needs and how they locate (and explain) the problems service users and workers face in the context of local and national power structures (Lavalette 2011: 5-6).

Here, proponents of Radical Social Work sought to address a criticism levelled at the pioneers of this approach in the 1970s; namely how would a radical approach address the day-to-day demands of the job when its main focus seemed to be exclusively on broader national and political group orientated action. This challenge has also been extended into the realm of social work education.

Social Work Education and Radical Social Work

In his analysis of social work education in England and Wales, Jones argues that:

There is no comparable system of social work education in the world which is so nationally uniform, uninspired and tailored so closely to the requirements of major- state employers (Jones 1996: 191).

As a consequence of these characteristics, social work education in England and Wales is marked by a distinctive, anti-intellectualism. Arguably, this trend has accelerated since Jones first presented his analysis.

A closer alliance between the state and the education of social workers was instigated by the establishment of the first single training body Central Council for the Training and Education of Social Workers (CCETSW), in 1970 (Bamforth 2015). CCETSW oversaw the Central Qualification for Social Work (C.Q.S.W.), which was the recognised qualification for social work practitioners and subsequently introduced a Certificate in Social Science (C.S.S.) for non-qualified staff working in caring professions. Debates were conducted as to what knowledge and skills base distinguished the CQSW from the CSS, and

what constituted the professional status of social work. The creation of a professional qualification and a hierarchical system between qualified and non-qualified staff was a source of contention for the Radical Social Work movement in the 1970s as they argued that separate qualifications reflected social divisions and led to maintaining a gap between social work practitioners and their respective clients (Bailey and Brake 1975). The creation of CCETSW and its new national qualification instigated a recurring theme in all subsequent government led social work education reforms, namely whether social work education is sufficient in producing competent practitioners (Bamforth 2015). Underpinning this debate are related issues around who decides what counts as legitimate knowledge for a social work education programme (Jones 2008); the emphasis placed on practical skills over critical knowledge by the state employer (Rogowski 2010), and whether social work education programmes should remain in higher education institutions (Pierson 2011).

The Conservative governments of the 1980s created a degree-level programme in response to lobbying from CCETSW which wished to enhance the professional status of social work. CCCETSW's own proposals for the content of the degree programme were however rejected by government and it was the state authorities that decided curriculum content (Pierson 2011; Bamforth 2015). The CQSW was replaced by a Diploma in Social Work (Dip.S.W.), which led to the creation of one qualification with various pathways for undergraduate and post-graduate entry levels of two, three and four years. This brought to an end the ambivalence social work had about its own professional status and the CSS qualification ceased. It was argued that the social work profession was perceived by the government as being overly concerned with activism and 'politically correct' issues and the subsequent educational reforms were an attempt to expunge this culture (Dominelli 1990). Effectively the social work curriculum was reshaped to meet the requirements of a market-led, employer focused competence-based model at the expense of more expansive conceptualisation of 'education, research, knowledge and understanding' (Rogowski 2010: 78). A further criticism was that the prescribed teaching programme was too allied to government views of social work as a technical and functional activity rather than a more critical political discussion (Dominelli 1990).

The New Labour Government of 1997 implemented its own review of social work education. This was largely driven by a change in the social care landscape brought about by the Community Care Act 1990 which inaugurated

a market system of welfare provision. This brought in a wide range of caring agencies staffed by non-professional staff. A new qualification to enhance the skills of the new private providers of care called Training Organisation for the Personal Social Sciences (TOPPS) in 2000. The governance of social work was changed as CCETSW was changed by a new regulatory body, the General Social Care Council (GSCC) and new degree programme with, it was claimed, a greater emphasis on developing practice skills by offering specialist final year training in child protection or adult safeguarding (Bamforth 2015). Social work was having to justify its existence within a new market-economy of social care by focusing on narrowly defined practice- based knowledge around risk and assessment as its core role (Bamforth 2015).

Changes in social work education has led to concerns that it is lacking policy coherence and raised concerns about its future (Featherstone and Bailey 2016). The precariousness nature of social work education was raised by Jones (1996) who also expressed concerns about what he saw as the restrictive knowledge- base of social work teaching programmes and raised doubts as to whether it could justify being a degree level course. Such concerns have not prevented the expansion of fast-track qualifying programmes and the introduction of a new apprenticeship scheme (Turner 2018).

During the latter stages of the last Labour government it appeared that social work education in the academy was being enhanced. This followed concerns over the public response to the death of Peter Connolly (Jones 2014) and the subsequent review into practice failures and review of child protection (Munro 2011). This review, along with the establishment of The Social Work Review Board (TSWRB) (which completed its review in 2009) and the Social Work Task Force (TSWTF) (which implemented the recommendations of the above review until 2013), inaugurated changes which were intended to improve professional standards and secure social work as an appropriate degree-level course: this included the creation of The Social Work College (TSWC) which introduced a new professional framework intended to shape degree programmes and post-qualifying courses as well the TSWC monitored and accredited social work degree courses to ensure they were in accord with the new standards. However, as Featherstone and Bailey note:

Since 2013 there has been increasing churn and a corresponding lack of clarity about government policy in relation to social work education at the qualifying and post- qualifying levels in a context of what would appear to be an unravelling of much of what has

been planned or was already being put in place' (Featherstone and Bailey 2016: 4).

Of late, the following events have occurred: the SWTF was abolished in 2013 and replaced by two new Chiefs of Social Work- Head of Families and Child Protection (Isabelle Trowler) based in the Department of Education(DfE) and a Head of Adult Safeguarding (Lynn Romeo) based in the Department of Health (DoH). This separation of roles has led to concerns it will could undermine the current generic teaching programmes that have been part of social work from 1970 (Bamforth 2015).

A further element which illustrates this division of social work governance was the launch of two separate and concurrent reviews by the DfE (Narey 2014) and the DoH (Croisedale-Appleby 2014) respectively: the latter recommended the splitting of the children and adult social work and the former, which was judged to be better researched (Featherstone and Bailey 2016), advocated generic programmes but identified research as a key skill for future graduate social workers. How such contradictory recommendations were to be reconciled at government policy level was unclear (Featherstone and Bailey 2016).

Meanwhile there have been significant changes in the funding and delivery of social work education. Fundamentally there is a two-tier education system emerging as fast- track training courses have begun to establish themselves. These new courses include Frontline, which focuses exclusively on child protection, Step- Up to Social Work, which covers both adult and children services and Think Ahead, aimed at mental health provision. There are differential financial arrangements for students undertaking such courses compared to undergraduate and post- graduate courses at University. Fast-track course students can receive bursaries up to £19,000 and have their tuition fees covered, whereas HEI students face tuition fees of around £9000 per annum, although bursary support is still available but has an uncertain future (McNichol 2016). Frontline is being expanded at a time when future funding of HEI social work courses has, arguably, yet to be determined (Macnicoll 2016). Featherstone and Bailey (2016) argue that: '...lack of clarity about the role of universities in social work education', runs the risk of 'weakening the research capacity in social work', as well as the 'links between knowledge generation, social work education and practice' (Featherstone and Baily (2016:2). This is arguably increased by proposals in the Green Paper, 'Fulfilling our Potential: Teaching Excellence, Social Mobility and Student Choice' on higher education (Brindle 2015) which proposes to liberalise degree

awarding powers for institutions and so facilitate teaching institutions, such as Frontline, the opportunity to achieve university status (McNicholl 2016).

Featherstone and Bailey also view the expansion of fast-track programmes as worrying because there is no evidence that they will, 'aid the construction of a robust and resilient workforce' (Featherstone and Baily 2016 op.cit.). They also challenge the effectiveness of the fast-track scheme by arguing it is unlikely to produce the quality (individual resilience) that is required for professional practice. Such criticisms have not prevented continued funding for Frontline with a pledge from the government to spend £50 million during 2020/21 to create a further one hundred social workers (Stevenson 2018).

One recurring theme which runs throughout the reform of social work education is the claim that social workers are not taught the appropriate skills necessary for the profession (Jones 1996: 2008). The then Secretary of State for Education, Michael Gove, criticised social work education as being misguided in presenting the view that the individuals and families social workers encounter as victims of society rather than helping them recognise their own responsibilities as he wished to refocus the curriculum to a more practice-focused content (Cooper 2013). Similarly, in his review of child protection teaching, Narey (2014) was critical of what he saw as undue attention to anti-oppressive matters and too much focus on families as victims of social inequality as opposed to practical skills. Narey (2014) proposed a curriculum that was much more practical and operational for child protection. These points echo previous concerns about the requisite skills required to be a social worker: in the 1980s the Conservative minister for education, John Patten, said that social workers should be like 'streetwise grannies', presumably a combination of a worldly wisdom combined with common-sense practicality (Bamforth 2015). Within this context the social work curricula is a battleground for what counts as relevant and significant education (Jones 2008). The drive is to create a narrow and standardized social work programme focused predominantly on practical skills at the expense of critical knowledge (Dominelli 2002).

This standardization, it has been argued, creates a tension in social work education described by Wilson and Campbell (2013) as follows:

I think there are tensions there because on the one hand we want them to be ready for agency practice and on the other...we want them to resist...I would like to see them leaving us a little radical- the more questioning and more critical of the system (Wilson and Campbell 2013: 91).

This quote highlights polarising views about social work education. Official reviews and curricula initiatives are focused on the need to improve practice skills over the development of critical knowledge. Rogowski (2010), however, argues that social work students are ill-prepared for practice because they have not been allowed to develop the autonomy for creative and critical thinking, as opposed to sufficient practice skills. He believes that social work is often defined in reductionist terms, and social work students are judged against proscribed functional tasks.

Similarly, Garrett (2003) identifies the emergence of a managerial culture in social work, with its adherence to targets and quantifying the outputs of operational practice, has also influenced the education of social workers as they are increasingly subjected to a curriculum centred on a tick-box culture. Education programmes and practice settings are defined by achieving a set of proscribed competencies which reflect the skills- sets of a managerial culture (Preston-Shoot 2004). Within this framework, it is argued, the opportunity to develop and expand a more creative, intellectually stimulating environment is circumscribed (Jones 2007). Fundamentally the curriculum is created by the government of the day which means it is an intrinsic political act, although it is presented as essentially apolitical (Ferguson and Woodward 2009).

The constraints placed on the social work curriculum have resulted in a teaching programme which is, according to Jones (1996), anti-intellectual. Jones argues that the origins of social work education established two characteristics which have, to varying degrees, prevailed throughout its history. The School of Sociology was the first school social work course in England established in 1902 by the pioneers of modern social work, the Charity Organisation Society (COS). Jones demonstrates that the curriculum was selective in its knowledge and it was carefully constructed to manage two principle concerns: contagion and containment.

Contagion referred to the anxiety expressed by the educators that social workers may, by their association with the most disadvantaged in society, '*go native*' (Jones 1996: 192) and be moved to campaign for social reform rather than individual amelioration. Containment referred to the deployment of selective knowledge which would reinforce the idea of individual limitations rather than structural unfairness. Consequently, Jones argues that the early pioneers of social work education drew mainly on eugenics as an explanation for individual and familial dysfunctional behaviour.

Post First-World War social work education was characterised by what became known as the 'psychoanalytical turn' (Pierson 2011). Largely influenced by ideas from Freud, this model prevailed until the 1960s as the core idea of the social work curriculum. As well as being focused on individualised problems, psychoanalytical theory offered a seemingly more scientific approach to human development and was politically useful during periods of economic hardship as it was not primarily concerned with social reform. In fairness to the ideas of Freud and subsequent psychoanalytical development, Jones (1996) argues that the curriculum was selective in its deployment of Freud's work and did not incorporate any of his arguments that related to society as whole. Adorno and Marcuse, who developed links between Freud and Marx in the 1950s and 1960s were according to Jones (1996), noticeably absent from social work courses during this time. It was noted by Jones that other developments from the field of sociology were incorporated into the social work curriculum from the 1950s onwards, but again it was limited to predominantly functional ideas on the nature of family systems and their role in socialisation of individuals.

A radical challenge to the social work curriculum occurred during the 1960s and 1970s largely as a result of the Seebohm reforms which resulted in a new influx of sociology graduates who brought radical, left-wing ideas to the profession (Weinstein 2011). However, according to Jones, from the 1980s onwards, the continual reform of social work education has been an attempt to limit contagion and reassert containment. So, for example, Croisedale-Appleby's (2014) review of social work, offers a more thoroughly reached analysis than Narey (Featherstone and Bailey 2016) and argues for the significance of research as an important part of social work practice. He nevertheless, places a significant emphasis on the requirement for a clearer set of practice-skills.

Proponents of Radical Social Work advocate space to be maintained to offer a critical appreciation of social work practice which promotes social activism (Jones 1996; Dominelli 2002; Garrett 2013). The majority of studies into resilience and social work education would appear to fit readily into a narrowly defined, state-endorsed construct of social work practice. There are personal accounts of students learning to manage via the acquisition of resilience. Smith (2014) describes her journey from being a sexually-abused child to a qualifying as a social worker in her adulthood and learning to be resilient was the key factor in her success. Arguably, a case could be made that although there are individual success stories and skills that could aid personal development, there

is another form of containment (curtailing critical views of resilience) and contagion (preventing other ideas of from a Radical perspective) be exercised here. There is hardly any recognition of the structural factors which cause distress for students, nor any critical articulation of how to challenge these factors.

Chapter Three: Methods and Methodology

Introduction

This chapter presents a critical account of the methods deployed and the methodological stance adopted in seeking to answer the central question of this research: how do social work students perceive resilience in their practice? This question is primarily concerned with investigating the significance of the work context in shaping students' understanding of resilience and its application in practice. In other words, it is an investigation into the power relations that exist between the participants and their

environment. The methods used to investigate this query are drawn significantly from the ideas of Charles Wright Mills (1916-1962) who emphasised the importance of establishing the link between personal experience and the social context. A Millsian approach can, broadly speaking, be said to sit within a Critical perspective as both focus on the primary interest in making 'ever present the power issues inherent in all research endeavours with an eye toward social change' (Swaminathan and Mulvihill 2017:5).

A Millsian approach to research shares several interests with Critical research. Both can be said to characterise an approach which fosters an attitude or sensibility that encompasses an analysis of social structures as well as individual agency. The researcher is focused on paying close attention to power and privilege as well as giving voice to marginalised groups in the interests of empowerment and equity. More significantly, Mills' research specifically challenges capitalist ways of knowing, that is to say knowledge that is produced to support a free-market ideology (Smyth, et. al. 2015), as does Critical theory more broadly in its critique of neoliberalism (Kuntz 2015). A Millsian investigation into resilience and social work students' experiences challenges prevailing research into the topic which is based on an assumption that resilience is an objective entity that exists independently of human agency and is amenable to scientific methods of investigation. Therefore, the investigation into individual student social workers' perception of resilience will be an analysis of the factors that have shaped their understanding of the notion of resilience as well as the way it informs their actions. More specifically, a Critical approach seeks to 'uncover assumptions, analyse issues of power that are visible and invisible and examine omissions' (Swaminathan and Mulvihill 2017: 6).

Consideration will also be given to my own position as researcher and how I exercise my power in relation to the participants, and their views. I recognise that I have more knowledge on resilience and its relation to social work practice, and so there was an obligation to reflect on my engagement with the participants. My relationship with the participants was thus shaped by an imbalance of power which meant I needed to be mindful about how it was exercised during the interviews. This required a balance between a respectful appreciation of the views and experiences of participants combined sensitively challenging unexamined assumptions and unquestioned beliefs. It was important both ethically and procedurally that I sought the most accurate and honest views of the participants as possible as this could give voice to their experiences (Maxwell 1996). As well as drawing upon the literature review and

policy developments on resilience I also intend to justify the use of semi-structured interviews for eliciting individual experience and also exploring conceptual variations of resilience in practice (Galletta 2013).

I also intend to justify the Millsian stance I adopt as it aligns with a Radical Social Work as both are fundamentally concerned with the way capitalist societies exercise power over people through the use of ideology and create compliance of individuals in their oppression (Kuntz 2015). More broadly speaking the characteristics of Critical research as cited by Alveson and Skoldberg (2000) mirror several chief concerns of Radical Social Work include an interest in subjects which highlight injustice and power, promoting ideas which challenge prevailing thought and advocating social justice. In essence, it is a way of exploring the intersection between peoples' personal experiences, in relation to their social context and provides an opportunity for prompting and probing ideas to gain a richer material (May 2011).

There is no other research on resilience using a Millsian and, more broadly speaking, a critical perspective. Seemingly current research adopts a positivist methodology inasmuch as resilience tends to be approached as an objective entity, open to empirical and quantifiable analysis (see for example Kinman and Grant 2011; Kinman and Wray 2013 and Grant and Kinman 2014). It tends to be non-situated (context free) and purports to establish universal and prevailing trends (Bryman 2010). In adopting a critical perspective, and utilising qualitative interviews, my research seeks to understand resilience via individual experience situated in its broader social context. It highlights the significance of the economic, cultural, historical and institutional forces which create students' perceptions (Sharpe 1982; Popkewitz 1984). A critical perspective draws attention to questions around not only what is known, but how it is known and what counts as legitimate knowledge. It opens up questions about whether particular ideas, values, beliefs and judgements are more privileged than others (Sparkes 1992).

Participants' personal details will be sketched, including, gender and ethnicity. There is a discussion of the sampling process and rationale as to how and why they were invited to participate in the research. The interview method is critically considered including the benefits of semi-structured interviews, along with recognition of potential imitations. Related to this there is an account of the questions asked and how they fitted with the overall aims and rationale of the research.

Setting the Context: Critical Theory and its Characteristics

Critical Theory describes a loose collection of scholars and practitioners who focus on the impact of power relationships in human culture (Willis et.al 2007). It was 'conceived in the intellectual crucible of Marxism' (Bronner 2011: 2) although leading proponents of Marx- were dismissive of the claims of economic determinism; rejected the stage theory of history and were less concerned with what Marx called the 'economic base'. Instead Critical Theorists focused more on political and cultural superstructure of society. This meant a focus on the use of power through the exercise of ideology. The key concerns were concepts such as alienation and reification: alienation, referring to the psychological effect of exploitation and the division of labour; reification meaning how people are treated instrumentally as 'things', through concepts that have been ripped from their historical context. So, for example, concepts of resilience rooted in a psychological model which claims to be scientific and objective but is created to fit within a social model based on individualism (Bronner 2011). Mills drew explicitly on the concept of alienation in his own analysis of white-collar workers in the 1950s when he stated that they were:

Estranged from community and society in a context of distrust and manipulation; alienated from work, and on the personality market, from self; expropriated of individual rationality; and politically apathetic - these are the new little people, the unwilling vanguard of modern society (1951: xviii).

Mills also drew upon the Marxist notion of false consciousness but applied it to the new middle classes who he saw as being part of new salaried social cohort, conditioned to follow sheep-like the demands of employer, whilst lacking an awareness of their own objective self-interest.

Max Horkheimer (1895- 1973), a key founder of the Frankfurt School, identified Critical Theory as a social theory orientated towards critiquing and challenging social norms. He contrasted this with 'traditional theory' which he said was satisfied merely understanding/ explaining society but not necessarily critiquing its structure and / or operation. Horkheimer also differentiated Critical Theory from classical Marxism which he saw as rooted in a positivist tradition of social analysis. Horkheimer argued that traditional research takes place in the social and economic context which makes that work possible but can itself be overlooked by researchers despite their claim to involvement in a kind of project whose only framework is good science. According to

Horkheimer, this often resulted in researchers in being complicit in vested interests of powerful groups:

The scholar and his science are incorporated into the apparatus of society: his achievements are a factor in the conservation and continuous renewal of the existing state of affairs, no matter what fine names he gives to what he does" (Horkheimer 1972: 196).

Critical Theory, according to Horkheimer rejects positivism's claim that knowledge built up through the collection of verifiable, empirical facts becomes a mirror of reality; instead it makes an argument for critical scepticism:

The world which is given to the individual and which he must accept and take into account is, in its present and continuing form, a product of the activity of society as a whole. The objects we perceive in our surroundings...bear the mark of having been worked on by man...The facts which our senses present to us are socially preformed in two ways: through the historical character of the object perceived and through the historical character of the perceiving organ. Both are not simply natural (Horkheimer 1972: 200).

Critical Theory rejects the assumption of knowledge as impartial; researchers themselves are not disembodied entities, knowledge can only be obtained from within a society of inter- dependent individuals. The Critical scholar seeks to avoid being complicit in the society's oppression by challenging common assumptions and beliefs (Traynor 2017):

Although [Critical Theory] emerges from the social structure, its purpose is not, either in its conscious intention or in its objective significance, the better functioning of any element in the structure. On the contrary, it is suspicious of the very categories of better, useful, appropriate, productive and valuable, as these are understood in the present order, and refuses to take them as non-scientific presuppositions about which one can do nothing (Horkheimer 1972: 207)

Critical research would seek to ask in whose interests are projects promoted, for example whose interest is served in the promotion of resilience?

Critical Theory tends to emphasise the relationship that involves inequalities of power and research in such a tradition tends to involve uncovering power relations and helping those without power to achieve some form of emancipation (Willis et.al 2007). The main focus is on social and economic relations and recognising that in capitalist societies there exist 'central structural mechanisms' and the task of the researcher is to 'organise one's concepts so as to grasp its essential features successfully' (Keat and Urry 1975: 112). This relates to an important point about Critical research; it is not just about studying everyday social life, but looking at the social intentions and conventions, and at the underlying mechanisms that make this possible in the first place. The aim is to uncover the structures of social relationships in order to understand why we have the policies and procedures that exist (May 2011).

Kilgore (1998) (cited in Willis et.al. (2007) argues that Critical Theory is engaged in a critique of dominant ideology. The aim is to expose domineering or oppressive power relationships between individual and groups. It seeks to establish the researcher and participant to critique commonly-held values and assumptions, and requires researchers and participants to become aware of how false understanding contributes to oppression and resistance. In this regard Critical Theory is concerned with human action and interaction as actions can create change in the historical context:

'Its goal is Utopia and its reality is that although Utopia may not be possible, our struggle to achieve it will at least create something better than our current existence' (Kilgore 1988, cited in Willis et.al. 2007: 82). In other words, it is aspirational for a changed and less oppressive social context. Critical Theory is concerned with examining the ways that people can be oppressed by ideology; for example, it seeks to investigate the ways that thinking being can be reduced to mechanical notions of what is operative and profitable; or ways in which resilience is conceptualised in such a way to focus on individual qualities as against the social context in which people lives. It is also concerned with the ways it is can be more difficult to analyse / challenge society and its norms - the significance of unquestioned assumptions and beliefs and the process of reification, that is the process by which the critical subject was reduced to making the individual a cog in the machine (Bronner 2011):

At the heart of critical social research is the idea that knowledge is structured by existing sets of social relations. The aim of a critical methodology is to provide knowledge which engages the prevailing

social structures. These social structures are seen by critical social researchers, in one way or another, as oppressive structures (Harvey 1990:2).

Critical Theory is committed to develop ways to both expose the use of power and to seek ways to resist these forms of control, and the deformation of the individual (Bronner 2011). One of the implications of this was the emergence of Critical Social Work from the 1980s onwards which drew upon some of the concepts in Critical Theory (such as the reification and ideology shaping individual identities) and moved away from the Radical Social Work. One of the key implications for this is that Critical Social Work was said to have broadened the scope of analysis in its recognition of other forms of oppression (Healy 2000), but it is also argued that it created what became recognised as a school of 'identity politics' (Mulally 1997) with a focus on individual needs rather than a commitment to social change (Mulally 1997). Consequently, it is argued that Critical Social Work inadvertently mirrored the individualism associated with neoliberalism and as such was rendered less challenging to institutional exploitation (Ferguson 2008). Radical Social Work reasserted the importance of seeking social change as well as individual empowerment (Ferguson and Woodward 2009; Ferguson et.al.2018).

Critical Social Work and Critical Theory

Ferguson (2008) argues that Critical Social Work can be employed in a broad and a narrow sense. In its broadest sense it is a notion that encapsulates different elements of a progressive nature such as

Marxist social work; radical social work; structural social work;
feminist social work; anti-racist social work and anti-oppressive and
anti- discriminatory social work (Healy 2005: 173).

Healy argues that these different positions all owe an intellectual debt to the 'critical social science paradigm (Healy 2005: 174) that is the Marxist influenced thought of the Frankfurt School of Adorno, Marcuse and Habermas.

However, Ferguson notes that a narrow definition of social work has become prevalent which, although 'concerned with the analysis and transformation of power relations at every level of society' (Healy 2005: 172), distinguishes itself from earlier radical and Marxist traditions through the incorporation of themes and concepts drawn from post modernism and poststructuralism.

Furthermore, Critical Social Work envisioned a different understanding of the nature of social division and possibility (or even desirability) of social change

(Callinicos 1999;2007). It is often claimed that Critical Social Work emerged as a reaction to Radical Social Work's failure to engage sufficiently with oppression faced by social work clients, including women, black and disabled people (Healy 2005: 176). It was said that Critical Social Work and the left generally focused on a range of oppressions from the 1980s onwards which represented a 'retreat from class' (Meiskins Wood 1986). Barrett and Philips (1992) argued that Critical Social Work offered a shift away from the focus on social structures, to emphasise oppression rooted in largely notions of difference. Consequently, Ferguson (2008) noted that Critical Social Work's emphasis on the politics of identity led to a fragmentation which mirrored that which was going on in neoliberal societies and undermined the basis for distinguishing between different forms of oppression; 'there was no hierarchy of oppression' (Ferguson 2008: 105). For example, in '*Structural Social Work*' (Mulally 1997), the main focus is on the individual's experience of oppression which occurs on the basis that it is of benefit to dominant groups. However, despite the title it notes somewhat ironically that the analysis excludes structural factors and focuses entirely on personal factors (Ferguson 2008). The problem with looking at individual experiences separated from the broader social context is that it undermines claims for collective action (Ferguson 2008). Critical Social Work drew upon similar causes of oppression as Radical Social Work but rejected the claims for collective or organised challenges to these approaches. Instead Critical Social Work drew more upon ideas from postmodernism as a means of challenging oppressive belief systems (Callinicos 2007).

Postmodernism can be characterised in two ways; either as a description of the present a 'postmodern thesis' (Browning, Haldi and Webster 2000), as a 'social postmodernism' (O'Brien and Penrose 1998: 195). Critical Social Work drew significantly on the latter characteristic. In conceptual terms Critical Social Work allied itself with Lyotard's 'incredulity towards meta-narratives' (Lyotard 1984 xxiv). Metanarratives are attempts to make sense of the world as an interconnected whole. Lyotard (1984) and Baudrillard (1992), argue that metanarratives are misplaced for two reasons: first, the claims arising from the Enlightenment that there is an objective scientific truth about the world are mistaken as, according to seminal thinkers such as Foucault (1972) and Derrida (1972), there is no such thing as 'objective reality' outside of language to be discovered; postmodernism is arguably an extreme anti- realist form of social constructionism (Ferguson2008). Secondly, postmodernism challenges the notion of a single truth, as proposed via meta- narrative views of the world, and suggest the possibility of multiple 'truths' with equal claims to authority.

Critical Social Work uses such notions in its conception of welfare; the history of welfare, it would argue, is a history of the suppression of the voices of multiple service users and the services provided are geared around containment and control even when conducted in the language of concern and care (Mullaly 2007). Such arguments would be shared with Radical Social Work but Critical Social Work focused predominantly a 'social postmodern' perspective, or a radical perspectivism rather than one allied to a Marxist tradition. This suggests all claims to knowledge are various forms of imagined interpretations. Poverty, disadvantage and discrimination of various kinds are not necessarily facts but interpretations of different realities. Combating these things is rooted in providing an expression of a value based on interpretation rather than a theory based on facts. Moreover, it is argued that the application of welfare based on 'grand narrative' principles tends to silence the experience of minorities and marginalised groups. Critical Social Work claims to offer an emancipatory approach in 'giving voice' to those who have been historically ignored (Leonard 1997 :22). It tends to focus on small-scale, local challenges as it is argued they are more achievable than large scale change.

Radical Social Work's Critique of Critical Social Work

The contribution of Critical Social Work has been viewed in a qualified manner. Ferguson and Woodward note that,

Anti-oppressive perspectives... have been important in heightening awareness of the multiple oppressions experienced by service users in a way that earlier versions of radical social work sometimes failed to do (Ferguson and Woodward 2009: 29).

They acknowledge that in its broadest form the critical approach has 'produced an impressive body of work' (Ferguson and Woodward 2009: 30) including a critiques of managerialism in social work practice (McDonald 2006). Weinstein notes that 'Identity politics also became more prominent as marginalised groups campaigned from the 1980s onwards to join the profession and win it to a new perspective' (Weinstein:2011: 23). Critical social work reflected a change in the demographic of its workers as well as its service users and as such facilitated a better understanding of social exclusion. As Healy (2005) notes, it brought in a wider range of oppositional voices which included developments in feminism, postmodernism and post-colonialism. A notable example of a critical approach is Garrett (2013) application of the ideas of social theorists including Bourdieu, and Honneth and Fraser, amongst others to the practice of social work. Arguably this brought a fuller understanding of

different forms of oppression as well as suggesting ways in which social workers can support clients in understanding possible sites of oppression and areas of resistance. However, Ferguson (2008) does not aver from a strident critique of Critical Social Work and its encapsulation of post-modern characteristics on three fronts; historical, philosophical and ethical. In regards the historical dimension Ferguson challenge claim that there has been a shift in economic models of production from Fordism (mass production) to post-Fordism (small-scale and niche production and innovative high-tech developments), claiming it tends to overlook the 'dark-side' of modernity. This is to say that it overlooks the inherent condition of capitalism to exploit and oppress as well as provide a material basis from want and hunger. This was at the heart of Marx's analysis of capitalism and underpinned the subsequent writings of the Frankfurt School (Stirk 2000). Ferguson cites Jurgen Habermas who argues that capitalism is a dynamic entity whose capacity to change and oppress is underestimated. This is also borne out by increasing concerns about growing levels of poverty, inequality and economic insecurity (Piketty 2014; Dorling 2015 and Standing 2016).

The ethical and political objections to a postmodern approach is that in rejecting the grand narrative view of history, such as proposed by Hegel or Marx, they present a view of history based on forms of power centred on individuals (Nietzsche 1990) or through discourses (Foucault 1972). The rejection of grand narratives is partly on epistemological grounds (there is only one perspective) but prevents one discourse, social class, as being privileged over other forms. All discourses are deemed equally valid. Foucault sees the exercise of power as omnipotent and dispersed through social relations. This is reflected in Critical Social Work theory which sees power and resistance as localised and located in micro-relations between men and women, black and white, gay and straight. Ferguson sees within Critical Social Work a contradiction in its application to practice as its adherence to postmodern notions of social construction focus on the individual at the expense of the social. Postmodernist social work rejects not only class as a basis for common interest and action but as a basis for collective action. Arguably it mirrors the New Right idea of individualism, and its adherence to personal circumstances and legitimises a neglect of structural and social context (Jones and Novak 2012). Furthermore, there is, according to Ferguson, a moral vacuum within this approach because, if power is everywhere and all discourses are equally valid, then the ethical basis for choosing one discourse over another, or siding with the oppressed over the oppressor is not clear. It is a matter of personal choice which side of power one associates with and there is no basis for criticising the choice.

Thirdly, Ferguson objects to Critical Social Work as it draws upon the anti-foundational claims to truth of postmodernism. It developed a narrative approach to social work based upon how individuals perceive their own reality (Parton and O'Bryne 2000; Fook 2002; Healy 2005). This approach is characterised as being rooted in the production of competing discourses rather than material reality. Ferguson sees this stance as problematic when dealing with individuals and families who face material challenges and problems which can be linked to social deprivation such as poverty, exclusion and mental health. Again Ferguson detects another restriction on the attempt to understand society as a whole, let alone change it, being a chief failure of Critical Social Work. He aligns postmodern ideas and those of seminal conservative thinkers Edmund Burke and Karl Popper in that they saw the opportunity for piecemeal, small change as achievable or desirable. Ferguson notes that, for social work, change then is limited to a personal level if at all possible. According to Callinicos (1997: 2007) underpinning this modesty of ambition is a pessimism in postmodernism rooted in failure in the 1960s to bring down the bastions of capitalism in the West and a 'discovery' of despotism in so-called socialist regimes such as China. Ferguson sums up his critique of Critical Social Work and its postmodern characteristics by noting that the

core postmodernist themes...the rejection of structural explanations of poverty and inequality...coupled with an ironic disdain for 'old-fashioned' notions of commitment and solidarity- chimes very well with the 'stress on the end of ideology (Ferguson 2008: 115)

In summary, Critical Social Work tends to underestimate the significance of social class and economic context in creating and framing the basis for oppression. Ferguson and Woodward cite Thompson (2006) who identified class, (or classism as he refers to it), as one among a range of characteristics: it is, much to the chagrin of Ferguson and Woodward, just one more form of oppression, no more or less important than say, middle-class angst' (Ferguson and Woodward 2009 :29). In essence the 'Collectivist attitudes of earlier radical movements were undermined by a new emphasis on difference and rights (Langan 2002: 213). They, and other proponents of Radical Social Work, argue that social class, inequality and poverty has gathered greater significance in understanding the experiences of social workers' clients as this century has unfolded. It is, in other words, the central factor in understanding oppression. Related to this is the other main criticism of critical social work, 'identity politics could also lead to a template of moralising and rivalries between

contested hierarchies' (Weinstein 2011: 23). Ferguson and Woodward noted that the application of anti-oppressive practice in the curriculum led to an unintended 'top-down moralism' (Ferguson and Woodward 2009: 30) as students were encouraged to focus on changing attitudes and behaviours rather than social conditions, and to be mindful that they deployed the correct terms rather than seek social justice.

Charles Wright Mills and Critical Theory

When Max Horkheimer became head of the Institute for Social Research he envisaged Critical Theory as a public philosophy that would address the prevalent problems of the day rather than being engaged with concerns among a narrow group of experts (Bronner 2004). One person who responded to this aim was Charles Wright Mills in his sociological study of American society in the 1950s. Mills was exposed to the ideas of the Frankfurt School in the 1940s via prominent figures such as Adorno, Horkheimer and Marcuse. During his time at Columbia University he worked alongside Franz Neumann and Leo Lowenthal, who were both associated with the Frankfurt School. Most significantly, he worked with Hans Gerth through whom Mills acquired a 'deep knowledge of the German sociological tradition' (Trevino 2012: 10). Mills and Gerth spent thirteen years co-authoring *Character and Social Structure*, published in 1953. A study which analysed the interaction between workplace cultures shaping a sense of personal identity.

In his most celebrated works, ' *The Sociological Imagination*' (1959) Mills called for academics and intellectuals to transform 'private troubles into public issues' (Mills 1959: 5). This aim conveys the central argument of Mills' own vision for the purpose of sociological research as a socially transformative enterprise. Essentially, the researcher recognises individual problems can be located in social, political and economic structures. The researcher can lift the lid on what is really going on within what are superficially presented as 'bundles of pathologies' (Warren and Mapp 2001), or individual deficits (Valencia 2001). The ideal of the sociological imagination is a call for sociologists (and the wider public) to see their own difficulties as embedded within society's formation. In making links to the social context Mills advocated the importance of drawing upon a broader range of knowledge rather than promote what he called the ' lazy safety of specialization (Mills 1959: 25). He emphasised the importance of seeing the political significance of supposedly personal phenomena. In this regard Mills was one of the first researchers to link knowledge and power (Smyth et. al. 2014).

Knowledge built on isolated facts and local perceptions is, Mills proposed powerless. It continues the separation of individual experiences from the wider social aspect. In this regard, Mills argued that the powerless suffer as they take on society's failure as their own. He identified how dominant ideas and beliefs are deployed to serve the interests of a powerful elite. Mills advocated a 'mass society thesis' which involves the view that the vast majority outside of an elite corporate power structure are rendered helpless and uninterested in influencing decisions determining their fate. Mills argued that the majority are manipulated and controlled by a combination of mass media and an education system which he criticised for its narrow, unimaginative and boring content (Mills 1951:339). In his 1956 study, *The Power Elite*, Mills identified how a small but powerful group exert influence over the rest of society in regards the tastes, values, culture and even history of society. He said the 'elite are simply those who have the most of what there is to have'...which is generally held to money, power and prestige' (1956:9). Mills utilised a Weberian theory of class, status and power to identify how the elite dominate society by ensuring that the much larger non- elite group share the same interests and values as those who occupy the higher circle of society. In this regard power is as much as what the elites know as it is what they do (Eldridge 1987). Mills, it is argued, solved a problem Marx left unresolved; if power emanates from the top of society downwards, as Marx held, then the question remained, how does the dominant class ensure the larger, less privileged group engage in the more exploitative aspects of society? Mills' analysis indicated the answer lay in co-opting lesser social groups to share the same common goals and interests (Elliott and Lemert 2014).

Critical Theory and Role of the Researcher

Critical Theory seeks to know the 'wishes and struggles of the age' (May 2011:37). In brief its chief concern is to reveal several contradictions between the circumstances that people work under that no longer works for them (Willis 2007). Critical Theory argues that the knowledge people have of their social world effects their behaviour and, unlike propositions of positivism and empiricism, the social world does not simply 'exist' independently of this knowledge (May 2011, Kilgore (1998) proposes that Critical Theory research begins with the researcher identifying a specific social setting and/ or organisation where it is likely the needs of the people involved are not met, or under strain within the current circumstances and they are able/ willing to put research into practice.

The researcher enters the participants' world through a range of possible research methods such as unstructured, semi-structured interviews and ethnography among others. Critical researchers recognise that the participants themselves may not be fully conscious of the circumstances which they experience but the critical researcher can offer an interpretive understanding of the intersubjective meaning of the participants' social environment. The task is not simply to collect data on the social world but to explain these within a theoretical framework which examines the underlying mechanisms which structure peoples' actions. The Critical researcher can analyse how current social conditions came to exist and so illustrate the tension between historically created-conditions and the actions of the actors (Kilgore 1998).

Radical Social Work promotes a similar approach to both understanding and changing the social circumstances of families and groups with whom they work. It locates the causes of poverty, inequality and disadvantage within the material and structural reality which shapes their lives, and aims to raise their clients' awareness of this process as well as developing resistance to it individually and collectively. Similarly, Critical Theory is posited in a commitment to promoting social change as

...critical social theory frames its research program and its conceptual framework with an eye to the aims and activities of those oppositional social movements with which it has a partisan, though not uncritical, identification. The questions it asks and the models it designs are informed by that identification and interest... (Fraser 1989: 113).

Critical research then is judged on its efficacy in revealing what May calls, 'relations of domination in society' (2011; 37). It is noted that from Marx onwards pioneers in what can be classed as Critical Theory have pioneered research which places a value in 'informing actions, and in particular, political actions' (Johnson et.al 1990: 144, cited May 2011; 37). Habermas identified a model of research he referred to as 'critical – emancipatory' which he pioneered as means of bringing about social change through dialogue, as opposed to what he referred to as empirical-analytical methods which sought to distinguish between so called facts from people's experiences (Habermas 1989).

Research Sampling

Sampling was purposive, or as it also known, selective, judgmental or subjective (Palys 2008). It is often associated with qualitative research and is seen as useful in facilitating relatively easy access to a target audience (Palys and Atchison 2008). Purposive sampling is often characterised as a non-probability sample that is based on the features of the population and objectives of the student. The purposive method chosen here was criteria sampling (Palys 2008). The fourteen social work students were chosen because they had successively completed a first placement of seventy days and thus met the professional requirements for practice at the first stage. This would have included gaining academic credits from the taught element of the course as well as meeting the professional practice requirements. Both these elements meant that the students had been introduced in some way to notions of resilience.

Generally speaking, the participants met three criteria proposed by Moser and Kelton (1983) for a successful interview: first was accessibility, it was relatively simple to gain access to the site in order to invite student social workers to participate in the research. The second feature is cognition; that is, participants had an understanding of what was required of them. The third was motivation as evidenced by their willingness to undertake the interviews. The interviews lasted approximately one hour. They were digitally recorded and contemporaneous notes taken. The participants had prior sight of the interview question so they were aware of what would be asked of them. It was made clear to the students the terms of the interview and that they had the right to withdraw at any time.

The Practice Educators were chosen according to a criteria process along similar lines as proposed above. They were easy to access, they had relevant knowledge and experience of the theme and its relation to social work practice and they were motivated to participate.

Research Coding

All the interviews were recorded and transcribed by the author. Verses Coding method was utilised to analyse the data. Verses Coding is identified as appropriate for identifying areas of human conflict and power struggles and is most suited for critical research analysis (Saldana 2016). Its chief characteristic is it to identify dichotomous or binary meanings in the research data which reveals areas of division or conflict (Boal 1995). Agar, for example, indicates reviewing texts for dichotomies or contradictions in relation to beliefs, behaviour and ideas (Agar 1994). The first cycle of coding is characterised as 'a

word or short phrase which symbolically assigns the evocative attribute under investigation' (Saldana 2016: 4). A first cycle of coding identified sixty-seven actual or implied areas of division or conflict. The section of the text that was coded was based on what the student actually said (emic) and my own inference of the individual item (etic). Verses coding is fundamentally an interpretive act requiring the researcher to give meaning to the data (Saladana 2016). The second cycle of coding involved developing a 'categorical, thematic organisation' from the first cycle (Saldana 2016: 6). I identified four key themes emerging from the research. The codes were grouped under four general headings based on the questions:

- Knowledge and understanding
- Application of resilience
- Utility of resilience
- Different models of resilience

Drawing on Wolcott's idea of a moiety – that is one of two, and only two, mutually inclusive divisions in a group – a second cycle was undertaken in order to identify four moieties, that is to say compress further the areas of conflict arising from the initial coding exercise into more manageable areas for analysis (Wolcott 2009). This process identified four areas:

- Definition: dominant verses emergent
- Practice: resilience as self- development verses exploitation
- Culture: compliance verses challenging
- Framework: individual resilience verses community resilience.

From this exercise four general themes were identified in a second cycle of coding. These are:

- Ownership and clarify of meaning of resilience
- Identify the capacity for exploitation in relation to resilience
- Resilience is developed through supportive rather than challenging experiences
- A community resilience, or the importance of relationships.

The data is summarised in the table presented below which visualises the stages of the coding from left to right. The first column summarises the first stage of coding and the specific unities or codes identified. The second column summarises the second coding process of identifying thematic areas. The third

code identifies areas of conflict or differences from which the key ideas emerge as noted in the fourth column.

First Cycle Coding	Second Cycle Coding	Moiety	Themes
Knowledge and Understanding Individual/functional/operative Effective/ self – management Innate/Personal/Bounce- back/ Self – management/Coping/ Universal Vs Relational/Support/Encouragement/ Developmental/ Contextual/Confidence/Bespoke- specific to person	Definition	Dominant vs Emergent	Ownership and clarity of definition
Application Prove oneself/Test/ Endure/ Core Skill/Integral/ Contain feelings/Unaffected/ Control/Suppression Vs Exploitation/Normative/Sink-or-swim/ Survival/ Anxious/ Repress feelings	Practice	Self- Development vs Exploitation	Identify the capacity for exploitation in relation to resilience
Utility Compliance/Congruence with work culture/ Expectations of supervisor/ Conform to environment/ Impersonal/ Boundaries/ Goal orientated/ Focus on process Vs Challenge/Affective/Empathic/Connection Personal / Supportive/Humane/ Caring/ Flexible/ Subvert	Culture	Compliance vs Challenging	Resilience is developed through supportive rather than challenging experiences
Different Models Responsibilisation/Risk to self/ Blame culture/ Failure is personal/ Heroic individual / Atomised/Socially – blind/ Tested/ Battles Vs Communal Support/Resilience emerges from relationship, not as a test of character/ Political context/ Ethics of resilience- where is right to say no?	Framework	Individual vs Collegiate support	Social Resilience

Data

Analysis

The chief characteristic of Critical research is to examine the interplay between the individual experience and the structural context in order to 'critique or make transparent the false consciousness and ideological distortions' which shapes our understanding (Smith 1993: 106). The data analysis seeks to achieve this goal by drawing on Mills' claim that the fundamental problem of everyday knowledge is that it is limited by other forces shaping peoples' lives (Dardeneau 2001: 3). The knowledge of resilience as understood by the students is, arguably, not what it seems as it is limited by restrictions in linking their understanding with a broader social context. According to Mills, we should analyse the world from a sociological perspective because we need to:

See through what is presented to us as an adequate, everyday knowledge, to gain a critical distance from this type of knowledge via a systematic, theoretical form of knowing (Dardeneau 2001: 3).

Mills proposed seven ways to stimulate the sociological imagination that facilitates a 'critical distance' within a systematic and theoretical framework as follows (1959; 233):

- First Mills advocated a need for 'rearranging the file'(1959;235), which, at one level, involves bringing in different ideas or concepts which had not been connected to the phenomena previously and at another level, involves looking for what Smyth calls an 'epistemological hook'(Smyth: 2015;3), which means reading outside of the area from ideas as concepts that could challenge prevailing notions. Studies on resilience in social work tend to focus on behavioural psychological models and overlook the contested and implicit ideological connotations associated with the term (Garrett 2018). Resilience is analysed under the critique of the 'new spirit of capitalism' (Boltanski and Chiapello 2005;2007) and social capital theory (Fleming 2017), amongst other ideas to indicate the potential for exploitation in practice.
- Secondly, Mills calls for a 'playfulness towards the phrase and words'(1959: 233) which requires an interrogation of the concepts and a 'play' with the possible underpinning assumptions. Current studies in resilience centre on the same definitions rooted in a positive psychological model based on either innate qualities or enhancing existing qualities (Marsten 2001), but ignore how it can be socially constructed (Traynor 2017). Drawing on the ideas of Lakoff (2003) and

Traynor (2017) resilience is reconfigured as a metaphor which reinforces individualism over collective responses to difficulties.

- The third aspect of stimulating the sociological imagination involves 'cross- classifications (Mills 1959;234), which means identifying' common denominators' and 'points of differentiation' (1959: 234) between the key concerns. This has been indicated already in recognising commonly held views on resilience as well as any alternate perceptions. This approach sought to identify competing conceptualisations of reliance and so open up new possibilities for a social model (van Breda 2018).
- The fourth aspect asks the researcher to look at 'extremes' (1959:235), that is a willingness to shuttle between the widest oppositional views on the topic that is presented; this could envisage seeing resilience as the magic bullet and answer to all problems (Rodin 2015) or as offering no benefits at all (Neocleous 2013). This approach helped tease out possible areas where social models of resilience could be developed (Ungar 2018).
- This connects with the fifth element proposed by Mills which he describes as a 'release of the imagination' (1959: 236), this is about developing the capacity to see a range of opinions on the research topic and so open up other possibilities on how the topic can be understood. In regards to resilience, it can be opening up a critical perspective on how it is constructed and deployed in practice. Mills said that as part of his 'individual craft' he found himself 'thinking against something in order to try...to understand a new intellectual field. The purpose of doing this was to bring into existence a 'new imagined world' (1971:236) This approach opened up a new possibility for a social model of resilience (Cottam 2018).
- The sixth method can arise from what is referred to as a 'comparative grip', or adopting what Mills also calls the 'contrasting type approach' (1959: 236). According to Smyth (2014) this approach heightens the push for a historical explanation of the research subject and raises questions on the origins of the topic such as, where did the notion originate? why is it significant now? who says it is significant and whose interests are served by this development? Such questions are investigated within the research questions with particular regard on why resilience is currently viewed as central to social work practice.

Consideration is given to what Mills identifies as the 'co-ordinate points' of biography, history and society (Mills 1971: 159). This involves looking at how the personal experiences of student social workers(biography) connects with the dominant model resilience(history) and its application in their work(society). Mills advocated the importance of drawing on 'life experience' (of the participant and the researcher) to reflect upon and make sense of important issues (Mills 1971:215). The sociological imagination according to Mills requires a 'certain playfulness of mind' (Mills 1959: 288) which requires a 'capacity to shift from one perspective to another' in order to build up 'an adequate view of a society... and its components'(Mills 1959:233) Research into student social workers' experience of resilience would require a broader engagement with the social and structural context which shapes their respective experiences.

- The seventh and final approach advocated by Mills is to recognise the difference between 'themes and topics'; a theme, according to Mills is what constitutes a big idea that resonates throughout the research whereas a 'topic' refers to vessels, or capillaries that are used to convey and sustains the larger ideas. The literature on resilience indicates a dominant view that it is rooted in individual development and the prevalent research is focused mainly on identifying the specific qualities required to be resilient (Garrett 2018). Mills challenged what he saw as orthodox research which was rooted in a positivist approach and involved data collection that analysed human phenomena/experiences separate from the social and structural context which created the detail. Mills argued that such an approach was too narrow and advocated the need to make links with the social and political context which created these beliefs; he said that:

this refusal to relate isolated facts and fragmentary comment with the changing institutions of society makes it impossible to understand the structural realities which these facts might reveal; the longer run trends of which they might be tokens. In brief, fact and idea are isolated, so the real questions are *not raised, analysis of the meaning of facts not even begun* (Mills 1960: 256).

Mills was less interested in the process, that is the method used to report the findings, as he made a clear distinction between a technician, that is someone

who is only concerned with the implementation of some standardised or codified procedure, and a craftsman who '*works on a problem of substance*' (Mills 1959: 215), in order to transform the materials. It is an approach consistent with a Radical Social Work perspective which locates personal troubles to structural causes (Ferguson et al 2018).

Participants

The participants were all full- time social work students who had completed the second year of their BSc or the first year of their MSc course. The course is delivered at new university in the north of England and has around ninety students at undergraduate and postgraduate level. Around 90 per cent of the student cohort is female and approximately 40 per cent identify as Black or Asian. Approximately 30 per cent are over 21 and around 20 per cent are classed as having dependents. The majority students are in receipt of a bursary to support them during their placement but owing to changes in financial support for students in 2014 by the government, around twenty-five per cent will be excluded which can have a detrimental effect on their ability to manage financially whilst undertaking their placement.

All undergraduate and postgraduate students who had completed their first placement of seventy days were invited to participate in the research (sixty undergraduates and twenty postgraduates). However, the response rate produced sixteen participants. These participants were the only one who felt able and willing to talk about resilience and their practice experience. The sixteen who were interviewed, fourteen being undergraduates. The sixteen participants who did participate mirrored some aspects of the social work demographic for England. The majority were female which reflects figures for 2014/15 (Skills for Care 2016). There were two Black male participants and all others identify as White. This is not fully representative of the overall current trend which shows 70 per- cent identify as White and the other 30 per cent would identify as BAME (Skills for Care 2016). All participants identified as British which is higher than the current figure for England which is 89 per cent (Skills for Care 2016). Six of the sixteen were over 24 which reflects the current trend nationally as 59 per cent of current social work students are over this age although the number under 24 has been steadily rising over recent years (Skills for Care 2016). Although there are some similarities between the individual participants and the social work student demographic it could not be claimed they are fully representative of the most recent social work student population.

Although the focus of this thesis is on the student experience a small number of Practice Educators were interviewed as they contributed a wider understanding of the placement experience for student social workers. Their views offered a holistic understanding of the way resilience is experienced by students. Six Practice Educators were interviewed and the characteristics of this small cohort mainly reflected the gender, ethnicity and nationality profile for the social work demographic identified above; the majority were women (four out of six), five identified as white and all identified as British. One key variable was length of practice; two qualified in the 1970s and had almost forty years' experience of supervising students, the most recent qualified over sixteen years ago. The most recently qualified had supervised 27 students whereas the longest serving supervisors estimated they had had over 150 students. All respondents were therefore drawing upon a considerable stock of experience.

An overview of the participants' details is presented in the grid below. They are presented in order of interview. All the Practice Educators were interviewed first and subsequent student cohorts from the BSc and MSc programme. This was owing to the accessibility of the participants. All references to the student social workers and Practice Educators in the research findings in Chapter Four are identified by name and date.

Participant	Student BSc/MSc/ Practice Educator	Gender	Ethnicity	Interview Date
Wilma	Practice Educator	Female	White/British	03/06/15
Clare	Practice Educator	Female	White/British	10/06/15
Rebecca	Practice Educator	Female	White/British	07/07/15
Samuel	Practice Educator	Male	Black/British	28/07/15
James	Practice Educator	Male	White/British	30/07/15
Erica	Practice Educator	Female	White/British	04/08/15
Sally	BSc Student	Female	White/British	08/06/16
Harriet	BSc Student	Female	White/British	09/06/16
Keith	BSc Student	Male	White/British	13/06/16
Louise	BSc Student	Female	White/British	20/06/16
Frances	BSc Student	Female	White/British	30/06/16
Aaron	BSc Student	Male	White/British	15/07/16
Mike	BSc Student	Male	Black/British	17/08/16
Rachel	MSc Student	Female	White/British	09/06/16
Jane	BSc Student	Female	White/British	09/06/17
Nicola	BSc Student	Female	White/British	10/06/17
Rowan	BSs Student	Male	Black/British	14/06/17
Deborah	BSs Student	Female	White/British	28/06/17
Robert	BSs Student	Male	Black/British	29/06/17
Fiona	BSs Student	Female	White/British	20/07/17
Noreen	BSc Student	Female	White/British	28/06/17
Matthew	MSc Student	Male	White/British	15/08/17

Interview Questions and their Rationale

The method applied to achieve this approach is a semi-structured interview which allows a comparison of individual experiences but also a

movement between the topic [of resilience] and the political and human context in which [resilient behaviour], takes place (Humphries 2008: 106).

The use of a semi-structured interview allows for individual experience to be rooted within the broader social context in which frames understanding. This is consistent with Critical research as links can be made between individual experience and powerful social forces (Newport 2016).

In the interview schedule for the social work students nine questions were developed which were divided into three sections. The first was simply 'Personal Details' and related to Kvale (1996) introductory question or Patton (1990) background information. This is simply a straightforward description of participants' personal information, including details on age, gender, ethnicity and completion of their placement.

The second section consisted of three questions which focused on understanding of the term resilience, perception of resilience and the application of resilience in practice. The first two questions in this section are:

- Q1 What does the term resilience mean to you, in relation to social work?
- Q2 What has influenced your understanding of this (an awareness of research, policy developments, training/guidance or implementation etc.).

These two questions focus on understanding and seeks to specify (Kvale 1990) degrees of knowledge (Patton 1990). In regards the knowledge element it is important to note that Patton states it is what the participant believes is 'factual' knowledge of resilience rather than what is actually the case (Patton 1990).

The first two questions are designed to identify how people develop their own personal understanding of resilience. This recognises the significance of individual agency in formulating meaning but also that our perceptions, awareness and sense of understanding is shaped by social and structural forces. Such matters can be influential in shaping our own judgements. It is an approach which recognises that a critical approach offers a:

perspective that retains a core element of ontological realism, whereby behaviour and experience as seen to be generated by underlying structures such as biological, economic or social structures. These structures or mechanisms do not directly determine peoples' actions; instead, structures have tendencies that may impact on our lives (King and Horrock: 2010:9).

More specifically, these questions recognise that the participants are part of specific material world which influences the framework of their experiences. The first two questions attempt to recognise the interface between personal and social meanings attributed to resilience. It also affords an opportunity to see how far subjective interpretations of resilience converge with normative definitions and offers a chance to examine where participant's understanding had come from. It provides an opportunity to consider the degree to which trainee social workers have internalised dominant meanings of resilience.

The third question in this section was:

- In what ways have you been required to demonstrate resilience in your practice?

This question seeks to make explicit the link with the social context in which students apply and possibly make sense of resilience. It seeks to reveal specific instances arising from the practice settings. It also allows a recognition of the challenges faced on placement in its broadest sense. This question is open enough to allow consideration of the setting, the resources, workloads and daily pressures encountered as part of social work. It also provides an opportunity to explore the links between their understanding and perception of resilience and its relationship with their actual activities. It could give rise to possible tensions between the definition and normative understanding of resilience and its limited utility in practice. There is also the possibility to investigate how compliant people are with adhering to dominant notions of resilience and what effect it has on them.

The information gathered here can be the basis for critical reflection as the participants are subsequently asked to consider if they encounter any limitations in their application of resilience. This question also illustrates the ideographic nature of the research as it attempts to show the meaning of resilience arising from specific and individual experiences as opposed to an all-encompassing concept. This also allows lived experiences to be recorded as befits a critical analysis of resilience (Dorzenko et al 2016).

Section 2 consists of two questions which focus primarily on participants' understanding of the application and utility of resilience in social work practice. This is:

- Why do you think resilience in Social Work practice is being promoted?

The second question focuses on how the participants evaluate the benefits of resilience in their practice. As such the question draws out their views as much as their understanding and so is interpretive question, geared towards generating individual meaning (Galletta 2013).

- To what extent do you believe the promotion of resilience is helpful to Social Work practice?

The first question explores the student's own awareness of resilience as a dominant discourse in social work practice and their perception of its significance. It allows an opportunity to recognise the way it is defined and conceptualised, how it is applied, and the purpose it serves in practice. The second question invites the participants to consider their understanding of resilience and opens up the possibility of a critical awareness of its application. This question can indicate the extent to which respondents identify with dominant discourses on resilience, and its utility in their practice. This may open up the possibility of identifying tensions between the perceived meaning and usefulness of resilience and its application to particular challenges faced by the students. It examines the possible dichotomy between individual perceptions and practical experience of social work. This facilitates an opportunity to invite participants to critique dominant discourses (Fook 2002).

Section Four consists of two questions. The first one is:

- To what extent have you been provided with the opportunity to critique the promotion of resilience in social work?

This question is designed to investigate if there has been any opportunity to develop a critical view of resilience that deviates from prevailing norms. It opens up possibilities for exploration. First is the suggestion that there is a prevailing view of resilience which is accepted uncritically by supervisors, educators and other colleagues. This provides an opportunity to explore, engage and discuss hitherto unrecognised limits to the notion of resilience. This would follow on from the previous points that have identified the specific social context in which the participants make sense and apply their understanding of resilience and possible tension that could arise in regards its utility. It could be used to highlight potential contradictions that arise between a resilient discourse which focuses on individual abilities to cope in a challenging context of limited resources and higher workloads. Students could be supported in developing a new perspective on notions of resilience and be empowered to recognise the potential abusive nature of its application. In this regard they can be supported in developing critiques that help locate the challenge to cope in demanding circumstances within the political framework in which their practice is framed and less on their own perceived limitations. Opportunities may arise for consciousness raising and developing strategies for resistance (Allan 2003).

The final question is simply:

- Is there anything else you would like to add about resilience in Social Work that we have not covered?

It allows for any further ideas, or nascent insights to be expressed and explored. Throughout all these questions arose follow-up questions, seeking clarification and elaboration, along with specifying and feeling questions (Kvale 1996).

The practice educator interview schedule had four sections and the questions in each section were drawn from the same typology as for the student social workers. The first section had one question which was broad and open-ended; it simply asked about background experience as per Kvale (1996). This allowed for factual information about length of service, qualifications, number of students supervised and additional training/ qualifications to be identified. It

also encouraged participants to talk about their experiences and helped establish an initial rapport.

The second section had two questions which were primarily about understanding and knowledge (Patton 1990; Kvale 1996).

- Are you familiar with any research into resilience and social work?
- Have you had any training or guidance on resilience and social work?

The third section had eleven questions:

- What does the term resilience mean to you?
- How important do you think resilience is for social work?
- How do students learn about resilience?
- What role do Practice Educators play in this process, if any?
- What are the benefits of resilience of promoting resilience in social work?
- What, if any are the disadvantages?
- What are the biggest challenges facing social work students in practice?
- To what extent does resilience play in meeting those challenges?
- Are there any challenges which students face for which resilience would not be sufficient?
- Is it [resilience] about individual qualities, or is it the social context?

These questions illustrate a mixture of knowledge and understanding, along with opinions and beliefs (Patton 1990), and specifying, direct and interpretive questions (Kvale 1996). They facilitate the opportunity for meaning-making questions, as well as critical reflection (Galleta 2013). The questions seek to form a sequential process as they shift from opinions to the application of resilience in practice. These questions also encompass the benefits and drawbacks of resilience for students. The participants are also asked to consider the significance of individual as well as structural factors. As with the interview schedule for the student social workers, probing questions were also used to elicit further information. Probing has been defined as 'encouraging the respondent to give an answer, or to clarify an answer' (Hoinville et al 1987: 107). I was able to examine not only how they responded to past events but also to consider future possibilities and if they would use their current experience and knowledge in a different way. This afforded the opportunity to actively engage in any changes of belief, understanding or perspective.

Both interview schedules for student social workers and practice educators followed a similar process which ensured clarity of purpose for those participating, and consistency in asking and eliciting information. This process had an introduction making clear the aims of the research and the rights of those involved. Finally, a set of concluding questions which afforded the opportunity for views not addressed in the previous questions (Whittaker 2009).

Interviewing, Ethics and Power

The interviews were undertaken in accordance with British Educational Research Guidelines (BERA) guidelines in order to ensure that participants were treated in a respectful, sensitive and dignified manner (BERA point 9 2016). I also drew upon Pring's principle of 'ethics-in-action' (Pring 1984; 10) in which he advocated sharing the data and findings with participants. Pring suggested one way this could be done is by it making clear at the start of the interview what kind of knowledge is being sought. Additionally, I am prepared to offer an alternative interpretation of their views and experiences and invite them to reflect, challenge and investigate the significance further. Stier (1991) argues that it is ethically important to recognise one's own perspective in the research perspective as this is consistent with being open and honest. Similarly, Glesner and Peshkin (1992: 104) say there is a virtue in recognising one's subjective view in the research process as this provides a perspective from which to build an investigation into the research topic:

separating your research from other aspects of your life cuts you off from a major source of insights, hypothesis and validity checks
(Maxwell 1996: 28)

I therefore made clear my own critique of resilience and initial participants to consider their own views and experiences in relation to this. This created a dialectical process which helped me refine my own understanding of how resilience can be understood in practice. Keeping in mind Eisner's point (1988: 97) that it is not always possible to know in advance what will be significant, I endeavoured to be reflexive about my own position during the interviews.

I was conscious that I was an 'insider' researcher, questioning participants who were part of the same institution as myself. I sought to counter this by ensuring students were fully aware of their right to withdraw, ensuring all findings would be confidential as far as possible and, as indicated previously, an openness about the aims and objectives. Moreover, I sought to create a

relationship with each respondent that would inspire confidence that they would be listened to and their views valued. I did this first by being empathetic, encouraging the participant to say what they feel and by allowing participants the opportunity to consider, reflect and revise their positions as needed (Pring 1984).

In considering my own position as an interviewer I drew upon Willig's model of self-reflection which proposed two levels of reflexivity (2001). The first she called epistemological reflexivity which refers to the assumption and beliefs we have about our world view. It is concerned with recognising dominant hegemonic beliefs and assumptions. My own position was to be interested in the material experiences of the respondents' lives and the social context which shaped and influenced their experiences. I was interested in how they perceived and experienced this, and what it meant to them. This allowed me to engage with the shared cultural context in which meaning is understood (Pidgeon and Henwood 1997), but I will comment further on this later. The second level Willig proposes is personal reflexivity; this is a consideration of one's own personal beliefs and assumptions in deciding what part of the interview is significant and what value and weight is given to what is said. Barbour and Shostak (2005) draw attention to one of the pitfalls that can occur in the qualitative interview, namely the researcher adopting the position of authority over the process; they may draw upon knowledge from their literature review and can have a clear sense of what they consider as significant for their research. It is what Barbour and Shostak describe as the 'impositional' nature of research as the researcher simply imposes their own interpretation of the replies. Drawing upon Bourdieu, Barbour and Shostak argue that this is a form of 'symbolic violence' (Barbour and Shostak:2005:45) as the researcher acts in an oppressive manner, replicating the structural inequality that one was beginning to investigate.

This approach has parallels with humanistic counselling as developed by Carl Rogers (2004). It was a form of questioning which sought an empathic understanding of the participants' experiences in that I sought an understanding as to how they serviced it rather than how I thought they did. In doing this, I began to meet an understanding of the cultural context which informs the researcher and participants' own understanding. However, as part of this process I also was obliged not only to seek understanding from their perspective but to also critically engage in a discussion of these views. This is what Barbour and Shostak describe as part of the 'emergent' process on qualitative interviewing (Barbour and Shostak 2005: 45). Here the researcher

engages in a dialogue with the participants and invites them to consider other interpretations of their specific experiences, and open up contrary positions in the account they provide. This approach has some similarity with a social work method developed by Parton, O'Byrne and Campling (2000) called 'relational reflexivity' in which the social worker engages in a dialogue with their service users in which they respectfully challenge dominant destructive self- beliefs and open up the possibility of more constructive understanding of themselves and their opportunities. The interviews with social work students involved establishing the extent to which they embraced dominant ideas on resilience, but I was also engaged in challenging these assumptions and inviting them to consider other possible interpretations. This is what Barbour and Shostak would describe as problematizing the interview and allowing new knowledge to emerge. In this dialogue there was the opportunity to highlight possible contradictions and tensions between their beliefs and their experiences. It began to help recognition of the power of dominant ideas and a perspective from which they can be viewed more critically. Being made aware of the emergent contradictions between the prevailing ideas on resilience and their own particular experiences allowed participants to gain a critical insight into the social and cultural values which informs their experience.

As an insider researcher I have a significant understanding of the participants' social context in relation to their practice. I have greater flexibility and co-operation from participants (May 2011) as well as the chance to establish rapport and trust (Burgess 1984; Hodkinson 2006). The drawbacks could be that I develop 'insider complacency' in that, because I know the environment I fail to ask questions that an outsider may do more readily (Hodkinson 2006). The idea of being an 'insider' or an 'outsider' researcher was examined by Miller and Glassner (1997) who proposed there was an inherent tension in the interpretive research process as, on the one hand, it is necessary to accept the participant's view of reality, but at the same time to be detached, viewing it critically in light of wider knowledge. I sought to develop and sustain an intersubjective understanding of the responses from the participants which balanced both an insider understanding and an outsider's critical analysis (Cicourel 1964).

An imbalance of power between the researcher and the participant was a key concern and I was mindful not to replicate the forms of social oppression which critical social research seeks to investigate. One of the ways I countered any power relationship is to construct a sample from students I did not

supervise as far as I possibly could. Another strategy involved drawing upon the ideas of Spradley (1979), Kahn and Cannell (1983) and Moser and Kelton (1983) on developing rapport. First, this involved showing an initial appreciation and acknowledging their participation and contribution was essential to this research project. Secondly, I made clear the aims and purpose of the research and their option to withdraw at any time. Finally, I showed an appreciation of the participants' co-operation to ensure motivation and engagement with the research interviews. One of the benefits of being an 'insider' in regards interviewing both social work students and their practice educators is that I had what Glesne and Peshkin (1992) identified as necessary 'background research' as I was familiar with the context of their social work practice. Here there is a balance to be struck between identifying perceptions that have 'wider resonance' (Mason 2002: 8) and capturing distinctive and unique rich experience (Miller 1998). It is a method of information gathering that is, according to Galletta (2013) most suited to examining the perceptions of individuals and investigate their lived experiences. Moreover, it is a method of information gathering suited to an interpretive method as it is focused on identifying inductive meaning, that is how meaning and experiences are understood by the individual. Also, as Galletta argues:

A key benefit of the semi- structured interview is its attention to lived experience while also addressing theoretically driven varieties of interest (Galletta 2013: 24)

This is an approach which can accommodate a Critical perspective in examining the social work student's perception of resilience in their practice.

One possible limitation of a semi-structured interview is that it does not allow for direct and varied experience that direct observation would allow (Miller 1997). This might be a justification for an ethnographic approach but practical considerations did not make this possible. The time required and the opportunity to gain access was significantly limited. Also, I am reliant on the participants being able and willing to talk, reflect and engage critically with an interactive research method. However, as the participants volunteered to take part they showed a willingness to engage in this process.

Validity

One other consideration concerned validity in relation to qualitative research. Validity is a highly contested term and one argument has been made to reject all claims to validate interpretative research as it should not be burdened with

fulfilling methodological and philosophical considerations which do not apply (Seale 1999). However, this is a rejection too far as there would need to be some form of validity to ensure integrity and it could be established via reflexivity (Steier 1991). The reflexive process can itself give rise to validity as it is made clear what my own part in the production of knowledge is and I take responsibility for the position taken in this process. This is what Gill (1995) calls accountable reflexivity. This is to say recognition that research is not value-free and to be explicit about my particular agenda.

Chapter Four: Research Findings.

The research identified four key themes, with a series of subthemes as follows:

Theme One: Ownership and Clarity of Resilience

Defining Resilience

Daniels (2006) undertook a small-scale qualitative study in Scotland and found students had significantly varied levels of understanding about the notion of resilience. These findings followed on from a similar study by McMurrey et.al. (2008) which found that social work students provided multiple definitions of the term resilience which were:

often...cursory, general, or non-expert explanation...[that] could mean different things to different people in different contexts (McMurrey et. al. 2008: 299).

The sixteen student participants demonstrated similar traits as in lacking any informed 'expert' view of resilience but differed in one significant respect in that they tended to offer a fairly uniform and, arguably, standard definition of resilience. More than half characterised resilience as 'bouncing back' and mirrored the essential definition of resilience described by Harrison (2012: 98). To some extent, this aligned with the dictionary definition of resilience which has its origins in the Latin term *resilio*, which literally means to 'jump back' (Mohaupt 2009: 63). All respondents nevertheless identified resilience in terms that fit with a more specific definition applied to social work practice which identified the:

ability to withstand setbacks, or even the capacity for individuals to use the problems as an impetus for possible change (Harrison 2012: 98).

Virtually all student participants expressed their understanding of resilience in functional terms.

Eleven students characterised resilience as the ability to 'bounce back' and offered virtually the same response in an unequivocal manner. Implicit in this definition of resilience is the idea that it is universally applicable and has an instrumental quality which individuals are called on in order to overcome adversity. For several students, resilience was described as an indicator of their achievements. Garrett argues that resilience can be viewed as part of a

burgeoning growth in self – improvement, as part of a ‘feel- good vibe’ to deal with adversity (Garrett 2018: 133).

The seven other students tended to focus on the ability to carry on in the face of difficulties and the need to persevere. This was a variation on the notion of bouncing back. One saw resilience as:

carrying on in the face of adversity' ... [it is the ability to] cope
[to] function at a good standard, in the midst of maybe turbulence
(Robert, Undergraduate Student 29/06/17)

This reply conveyed several implicit assumptions that characterised most other respondent's definition of resilience. Resilience is viewed as unproblematic term and understood as an instrumental or operational quality to function well in the role. It is also seen as pertaining to one's personal qualities. This was conveyed by Rose, a student who understood the meaning of resilience within the context of one's ability to perform their tasks:

I think it means...not having your practice affected by challenging situations; so something difficult or upsetting has happened...just be able to manage that and stop it interfering with your practice... I think it is about not giving up. That is a sign of resilience (Rachel, Postgraduate student 09/06/16).

As well as enabling the individual to manage 'challenging situations' and the need to do so in a way that meets the performative needs of the role, there is an implicit sense that resilience is defined in terms of survival. In one sense, this is understandable as student social workers are being tested to show that they meet professional standards for a challenging job (Thompson 2016). There is the need to show one can deal with what is often seen as taxing emotional labour (Ingrams 2016). However, the emphasis is exclusively on the individual to manage but never question the nature of the challenges faced and or the context in which they arise (Haupt 2009; Diprose 2015).

One student who did consider the social context said:

I believe that resilience is like a fluid term which can differ by setting; so the kind of resilience you will need to work in frontline child protection is a different kind of resilience, [you need for other settings] so there are similarities and parts you can take out for

each setting but I would say it does differ by setting (Matthew, Post Graduate Student 15/08/17)

This response suggests that resilience requires a calibrated adjustment to the demands of the role but, whilst there is suggestion that resilience is not a uniform quality it is still understood within the context of the role. It is described as 'need' for practice and the issue is what kind of resilience is unquestionably necessary for practice rather than what constitutes the term. Other responses tended to understand resilience as a quality that arose from practice experience:

[Resilience] is the capacity to handle different...situations, crises, demands...learnt about[it] from context (Mike, Undergraduate Student 17/06/16).

The emphasis is on the individual to show they have what it takes to manage these obstacles. There is no reflection or question of what the 'capacity to handle' these difficult experiences is, nor how it can be acquired or developed, except it evidenced in the ability to cope with negative events. Related to this is a theme that has been noted above, that resilience is understood as means to persevere in the face of on-going difficulty:

Resilience is to me like a person's ability to endure something and still be able to continue afterwards (Keith, Undergraduate Student 13/06/16)

This contrasts with some of the claims made by researchers on resilience in social work practice who say it can enhance self-esteem and lead to fulfilling work experiences (Kinman and Grant 2014). The notion of resilience as a form of survival in the face of continual difficulty was conveyed by another student who said:

Resilience in social work means[the]ability of coping with difficult or challenging situations.... a way of coping (Rowan Undergraduate Student 14/06/17).

Again resilience is framed within instrumental and functional terms and seen as the means of showing hardiness in the face of permanent struggle. This resonates with Garrett's study of resilience as he traces the way that it has been promoted as a specific quality to be developed in

army recruits and in turn has begun to influence educational policy in enhancing character for civilian life (Garrett 2018: 144). It is focused on the individual alone to show they have the 'fighting qualities' to continue and survive.

The responses above tend to converge around a similar meaning of resilience; it is characterised essentially as the ability to 'bounce back', or the means to persevere and carry on in the face of adversity. It is often framed in function and performative terms and understood as emerging with the challenges faced within social work practise. Mills' study (along with Hans Gerth) of the development of social psychology in capitalist societies (1953) could provide a guide to understanding how the participants developed a similar definition from their work experiences. Mills and Gerth developed a series of complex interlocking tools to demonstrate how institutional processes can mould and shape character personality traits. A central feature of their study was the social function of language as it both shaped human understanding and provided an articulation of their motives for the actions they undertook. They said:

It is clear that when we speak of understand the motives or intentions, we must pay attention to the social function of language in interpersonal conduct: we can speak of understanding something only if it is meaningful, and language, a social acquisition and a personal performance, is the prime carrier of meaning (Mills and Gerth 1953: 19).

The key point is that socialisation is a continual process and can alter via different social roles, although work is one of the main areas in which it occurs. Language, it is argued, is crucial to the operations of institutions for three reasons. First, it is the most significant mechanism for interpersonal conduct, as people are required to have a shared understanding of terms they use. Second, it is a major source of knowledge of ourselves, this is the means we explain our actions to ourselves, and finally it is the medium through which social roles are organised. Recently, Streeck (2016) has argued that that Mills and Gerth's analysis of the relationship between individual character and social structure is relevant to understanding what he sees as social and economic disintegration in capitalist societies. By disintegration he means, 'the advanced decline of the capacity of capitalism as economic regime to underwrite a stable society' (Streeck 2016: 35). In the face of such entropy it is claimed that that 'life in society of this kind demands constant

improvisation...' (Streeck 2016: 36), and as systemic social systems decline, there is greater emphasis towards individual repertoire of skills to cope and maintain social systems.

In this context, Mills and Gerth's analysis becomes relevant. Their study investigated how a given social structure both requires and, as long as it lasts, produces a corresponding character among its occupants. Streeck notes that resilience has become deployed as a way of surviving economic decline. In the sphere of political economy, the term can be used for the capacities of individuals and communities to withstand the ravages of capitalism (Hall and Lamont 2011). The point is that resilience is not about resistance to the social structure but more about voluntary adaptive adjustment. The more individuals become resilient at a micro level the less impetus there is at the macro level to challenge the uncertainties produced by market forces. In Mills' conception the issues arising from the public (structural) arena are being placed on the shoulders of the individual, and becomes their concern alone.

Making Sense of Resilience.

All the sixteen social work students interviewed initially described resilience in largely positive terms but the majority shifted to a more critical view during the research. They all saw it as a relevant concept for social work practice and, although none demonstrated any knowledge of research into resilience, they all shared a common understanding of the term. All said that they developed an understanding of resilience from their practice experience. Resilience was, for them, understood as an activity that one performed as much as a quality one possessed which corresponds with some existing research (Grant and Kinman 2013).

Virtually all the participants understood resilience as a feature of their practice from the challenges they faced in placement, either with particular cases, or from certain working environments. A few considered whether resilience was an innate quality or something that was learnt but all believed it was a quality that could be enhanced from practice experience. This contrasted with previous research on student social workers' perceptions of resilience as an innate quality (Kinman and Grant 2011). Resilience was largely understood as the ability to 'bounce-back', and or the ability to persevere in the face of difficulty. Although none could cite specific research, ten of the thirteen said they had learnt about it from the taught element of the course, although one recalled a specific lecture on resilience. All said they found the support of the practice educator helpful in developing resilience; the main feature cited was the ability to reflect and make sense of their experiences as well as the

opportunity to express their feelings. Several spoke of the importance of sharing negative emotions in this context, especially fear and anxiety around not coping well. This contrasted with previous research which found that social workers tended to give limited credit to either the course or placement support staff in their appreciation of resilience (Collins et.al. 2010).

The practice educators all saw resilience as an essential quality for social workers and shared a similar view that it was characterised as perseverance in the face of adversity. Only one identified any specific training on resilience and another made links to emotional Intelligence (see Goleman 1995), but most others either said they had no formal training, or were unaware of any research on resilience. This was the case with Samuel (28/07/15) and James (30/07/15). This reflected previous research which suggested that social workers generally have limited understanding of conceptualising resilience, as well its application or assessment (McMurray et.al. 2008). Although there was unanimity around the beneficial aspects of resilience there began to emerge a growing critique of resilience during the interview process from all but one of the participants.

A Critique of Resilience

All the student social workers said that they had little or no opportunity to consider a critique of resilience during their placement. A few examples illustrate their experiences. Aaron (15/07/16) for example, said that, although the course had encouraged them to be critical of social work concepts, this did not extend to resilience. Robert (29/06/17) said it was important that a critical review of resilience should be a key part of the placement experience. Matthew felt that the opportunity to critically consider resilience was restricted by the demands of his placement. He said he had to focus on procedural matters, with little time to think about other concerns. He also said he had to continue in paid work as the 'placement did not pay the bills'. This further curtailed his scope to think critically. Natasha (05/17) said that she had not thought about a critique until being asked about this in the interview for this research, but welcomed the opportunity to develop one as she recognised its potential for exploitation.

The participants were encouraged to develop a more critical view of resilience by drawing on the ideas of Lakoff (2016) and Traynor (2017) who noted the significance of metaphorical constructions. Metaphors, according to Lakoff, provide a mental structure which helps shape the world. Resilience could be seen as metaphor for the plucky social work student proving themselves in the

face of adversity. If they struggle and fail to achieve then it can be framed as a personal failure. It can be deployed as a cover for exploitation.

Theme Two: Capacity for Exploitation

Resilience as Exploitation

Harriet (09/06/16), an undergraduate student, when asked, what does resilience mean to them in relation to social work said simply:

I suppose it could be used as a way to get people to do more work than they should be doing, and saying, 'You are not being resilient enough (Harriet, Undergraduate student 09/06/16)

This observation taps into a concern that resilience could be used to problematizes social workers struggling to cope under worsening working conditions (Considine et.al.2015; Kinman and Grant 2016).

Another student, Fiona, presented a similar view but did so in a conflicted way. One the one hand she saw benefits for resilience in that:

I can see how important it is...If you are not able to cope, to bounce-back, then how are you able to help others. Also you cannot let things get to you too much because it is not healthy (Fiona, Undergraduate student 20/07/16).

But Fiona also said:

..... it can be a useful word for the government..... because we have got big workloads and they can say that if you cannot deal with that then you do not have the resilience. So it is placing it all on the individual...It is a useful concept for looking after yourself, and how you are managing your emotions, and, at the same time, being given too much work and it is not a healthy environment (Fiona 20/07/16).

This demonstrates a sense of ambivalence about the application of resilience in practice; it is recognised as being personally useful to cope with the immediate demands of social work but at the same time there is some recognition that notions of resilience can be deployed as means of manipulating employees to undertake additional or risky work. Mike, an Undergraduate student (17/08/16), argued that resilience was deployed as a means to place the challenges of the placement entirely on the individual student and to ensure they would comply:

[my manager said] you will need resilience to survive this placement..... I was left to work on my own.... I was told, '...you need to develop your resilience.... I had a traumatic incident... I went to the office, I had to show my manager I was overwhelmed and he mentioned the word again to me. He said I should develop my resilience in this work because I will experience more situations like that. I thought yes, I will need to develop that (Mike, Undergraduate student 17/08/16).

Mike saw resilience as emerging from exposure to difficult situations and that the onus was on him to manage this alone. There was no sense he was offered any guidance or support on how resilience could be acquired, or whether there were limits to what he could be reasonably expected to endure. Resilience here is about learning to survive, or tolerate turbulent working environments. It could be argued that this is what learning to be resilient in social work is about as coping with stress helps to produce robust character (de las Olas Palmer and Hombradas-Mendieta 2014). The other argument is that resilience is a means of engineering working practices whereby staff comply with practices which are increasingly unacceptable under the guise of being resilient (Bottrell 2009). Robert saw resilience as a means of coping uncritically with worsening conditions:

you've got to be prepared...to work in an environment where you are not comfortable because of [the] workload... in the face of cuts and limited resources...and time...with which you have got to do the work (Robert, Undergraduate student 29/06/17).

This neatly sums up the arguments of the pioneers of the SWAN movement who sought to revise a Marxist-inspired critique of worsening working conditions for social workers more than a decade ago (Jones et.al 2004). Resilience seems to be a way of neutralising any further questioning or criticism of the experiences one is exposed to and the emphasis is on learning to cope. Aaron described his experience of resilience following a difficult incident in which he was physically assaulted in a residential setting:

[my practice educator] talked to me about this...my placement was not as straightforward as it could have been...[PE] gave me a list of things that she wanted me to go through - the practice educator wanted to check how I was going with it [difficult situation on placement], was I resilient... She wanted to check

that I coped in an appropriate manner (Aaron, Undergraduate Student 15/07/16).

The focus here is on the individual ability to cope rather than the context of work and the problems it produced. Arguably, this illustrates a reversal of Mills' aim to make 'personal troubles into public issues' (Mills 1959: 187). Resilience then becomes a way of exploiting individuals as they are required to be responsible for managing situations over which they have little control.

Resilience, according to Garrett (2018) is a pervasive form of governance percolating its way into a variety of institutions in which individuals are asked to respond to 'collective instabilities and uncertainties' engendered by neoliberal economics, which are taken 'for granted as immutable external forces akin to the forces of nature' (Garrett 2018: 261). Most resilience research in social work is focused on identifying ingredients that help people cope with the unyielding demands of work and resilience is deployed as a means to make student social workers accept greater responsibility for any demands placed upon them. Another criticism of the dominant conceptualisation of resilience is that it is insensitive to the social context shaping people's lives (Ungar 2008; Bottrell 2008 and Mohaupt 2009), but none of the participants drew attention to any contextual or structural characteristics. They nearly all shared a common understanding of resilience rooted in personal responsibility and uncritical acceptance of the circumstances in which they had to apply it. Resilience was understood as a capacity to be open to abuse if need be as a test of resilient character. The proof of being a good professional was the manipulation of negative feelings to maintain an impersonal approach to signs of injustice. Resilience is, according to such a conception, is about 'acquiescence, not resistance' (Neocleous 2013). This was thrown into stark relief by one practice educator who thought resilience was:

crucial because obviously there is a lot of pressure... [from practice and academic work] and sometimes I think that it is not recognised just how difficult that is for students (Rachel, Practice Educator 07/07/15).

but, also added that there were:

Outside pressures. The majority of students I work with now are in part-time employment and so there is very different financial pressure' (Rachel, Practice Educator 07/07/15).

She noted that:

[‘The majority [work]...around seventy-five per-cent, and that has changed in the last few years since when I have been a practice educator because when I started I worked with students who actually gave up their part-time jobs to complete placements, but now students have increased financial pressure.’

(Rachel Practice Educator 07/07/15)]

In some cases, the practice educator described what they called ‘demanding’ circumstances for a number of their students as they were:

not going home for a few days because they are going from placement to work and back to placement...working part-time during their placement has increased. ... you can see the pressure [to stop working]’ (Rachel, Practice Educator 07/07/15).

However, five practice educators felt that students were reluctant to be ‘honest and open’ about the pressures they faced as they did:

not want to be seen failing, and they want to be seen managing the pressure... [which is] incredibly high in students...and in some work settings it is not as easy to bring those issues and you are going to be judged[harshly] (Erica, Practice Educator 04/08/15).

No research into resilience and social work practice has identified these specific social and cultural pressures. Rajan-Rankin (2014) did note that structural factors were often overlooked in research on promoting resilience in social work students and hardly any appeared to utilise support services that were available in the university or work-setting. Traynor (2017), in his critique of resilience in nursing practice, draws upon the studies of Becker et.al. (1961) into ‘professional socialisation’ and, although they applied to newly-qualified medical staff, could arguably relate to social workers in training. Professional socialisation involves new entrants learning the behaviour, norms, skills, attitudes, and values of the profession, acquired both through formal and informal learning processes. This is not just a cognitive process but the internalisation of social beliefs and attitudes. The key driver to learn is, according to Becker et. al., the fear of failure and new staff can experience a shock as they are required to lose their ‘lay/ outsider’ views and take on a new professional

identity. Traynor argues that nurses are required to lose their self-view as carers and take on a corporate language of self-management.

Arguably a similar process occurs with social workers as they are required under their professional domains to show leadership qualities, which means being autonomous, self-managing and 'in control'. In such circumstances social work students, like nurses, may feel overwhelmed and consequently, 'what you find you need is not so much compassion but resilience' (Traynor: 2017: 46). It is arguably significant that there is a growing promotion of resilience in 'official' discourses on social work education. The former professional body the College of Social Work, stated that students should demonstrate at entry, an understanding of the importance of emotional resilience and adaptability (College of Social Work 2012). Students are socialised into suppressing the pressures they face both financially and within the working environment in order to 'fit-in'. Resilience is deployed to limit what is permissible to raise as a cause for concern as the focus is on the individual to manage rather than address the wider context. As Collins noted, '...too much emphasis on resilience can mean that workers are more likely to adopt, to acquiesce and accept what is unacceptable' (Collins 2017:96). Similarly, Harrison (2012) argues that excessive emphasis on individual resilience in female social workers can lead to stress being perceived as a the 'norm', beyond the realms of intervention or policies, which can draw attention away from organisational and structural exploitation.

Resilience for social inequality.

When asked about ways they have had to demonstrate resilience in their placement only one student made a link with the social and political context in which they work:

.... in the field of homelessness [which can] feel despairing...people returning to drugs, having no escape from poverty... [resilience was required] actually helping people find hopeyou know, working through and helping people find resolution. I think of the broader context of the work.... the austerity, those not have access to...you know, fighting so hard for a pittance.... feeling like that's not going to change with a Tory government.... I mean, where do you want me to start? I have been here before you know what I mean.... and it is like... I think i am resilient... because I am still here and I keep going with it and it does feel completely frustrating because the context does not change (Noreen Undergraduate student 28/06/17).

This response chimes with Mills (1959) ethos of making public issues from personal concerns and a radical social work perspective of making links to the structural context which shapes clients' lives. The more immediate challenge students faced in their placement arose from lack of support from management in recognising the emotional toil of addressing injustice:

I think, unless other people...in supervision, have got the capacity to engage with the emotional context of the work, or the emotional implications of the work, then that can work against resilience. What I am getting at is that it can come down to gender...on my placement I've really had to dig deep in my resilience bank because... I am managed by someone who is fairly incompetent (Noreen, Undergraduate student 28/06/17).

This response could relate to research which has noted that as social work is an increasingly feminised occupation; resilience, has arguably, been deployed to ask female workers to cope with greater demands rather than recognise the structural factors causing the challenges they face (Harrison 2012). For example, Deborah said, in relation to their work with refugees, that she felt inadequate as:

I didn't know the benefits system and most of the work with them [clients] was navigating the benefit system... I was frightened I would get it wrong...I didn't want to feel incompetent about it (Deborah, Undergraduate student 28/06/17).

Deborah wanted to do well and 'went above and beyond for them'. It was clear that she felt the difficulties of managing support for refugees keenly and initially said she showed resilience by simply: 'Turning up to work the next day'.

Deborah said she received no guidance or support in helping migrant service users. She belatedly came to realise that there are seemingly deliberate structural obstacles in place to limit financial help for migrants. Deborah felt the responsibility to manage this situation was her responsibility and a test of her competency. This student was keen to address the consequences of what they saw as social injustice and a number of other respondents saw addressing the particular problems arising from social inequality as a challenge, but also a rewarding experience. Rachel said she was able to help some of their clients with:

a lot of things, benefits, housing, filling out forms.... it was nice as you thought you were really helping them... (Rachel, Postgraduate student 09/06/16).

Another student identified supporting a victim of domestic abuse and seeing an improvement in their circumstances. Here is an example of social work as a rewarding experience arising from relationships and problem- solving rather than managerial processes (Jones 2002; 2004). Equally social work is characteristically dealing with crisis and several respondents noted examples which included the removal of child at birth from its mother, confrontational behaviour, bereavement when working with the elderly and supporting clients through emotional turmoil (Thompson 2016). Arguably, there are links here between the individual problem and a broader structural context but even in the field of radical social work there is a requirement to support the immediate individual concern as much as the political framework (Lavalette 2011). Resilience as a necessary individual trait would have merit in this context.

Other challenges identified by students related to limited resources. For Louise, poor resources caused significant stress and make her consider leaving the placement:

I fell to bits half- way through [the placement].. and it was the University's fault (Louise 20/06/16).

Louise cited the academic work she had to do alongside the placement- related work, as:

Then you go back to record your data.... and I was getting to the point where I was needing to keep the records up- to - date at home, and by the time I was getting home, (which was seven, or eight o'clock at night), I would start my 'uni' work and especially... having children was just well.... [difficult] (Louise Undergraduate student 20/06/16).

There was little recognition of the working conditions as a key factor causing stress by Louise. She clarified that her workload was onerous but she said it was the pressures of 'university work', along with 'family life' which were problematical. This illustrates Mills argument that work can exert such an influence over people they become acquiescent to its demands even at the expense of their own wellbeing (Mills 1951).

Four of the students cited work culture as something which required their resilience. For one, it was lack of support ensuring that they had enough opportunities to demonstrate their abilities against professional standards. Another had to cope with the differential demands of two managers; one was more sympathetic to the demands of the course work, but another was focused solely on practice. The student who worked with refugees suggested a work culture which she did not fully abide by; the manager noted that the student went, 'above and beyond', for the clients', but the students said that when they sought guidance from the manager they reported them as being 'blasé' about the approach they took. Deborah observed that her colleagues:

were probably more resilient than me... [but speculated] that they were because it was just another day and just getting it done and get it over with (Deborah, Undergraduate student 28/06/17).

The implication was that other staff were not conscientious. A striking example was a student who felt the need to challenge one of her managers as she felt the manager exercised power unfairly. The student described that she did not enjoy her placement as:

I felt that they used me as member of staff for their own ends.... answering the 'phone, answering the door (Sally, Undergraduate student 17/07/16)

Sally said that she had had to challenge the allocation of tasks and that she found some satisfaction in the placement but:

was it not for my own assertiveness, I would not have done half of what I did (Sally, Undergraduate student 17/07/16).

Sally identified resilience as a necessary quality to ensure she was not 'used' by the placement. She saw the placement influenced by one specific manager and, whilst this is a significant factor, the team is often recognised as crucial for shaping working culture. One practice educator noted that the students' requirement to develop resilience is more often related to the team they are working in than the clients they work with:

I think part of resilience that students need [is] to build up around the people that they are working with, so I think the input that people can have can, sometimes, rock their resilience (Erica Practice Educator 04/08/15).

Erica expressed the view that ideally the team and not just the manager, would play a positive part in supporting students. However, negative work culture can be destructive for morale. Smyth et. al. (2014) characterised research on the policy and practice of education as being apolitical. This is arguably demonstrated in the student experiences above. Only one saw a link between the challenges they faced in supporting their clients and the political context in which they worked. The other participants tended to describe their experiences as characteristic of an educational culture; emphasis on administrative processes rather than human relations and working culture which prizes instrumental qualities over critical development (Smyth et al 2014). The chief concerns of the participants centred around mastery of operational processes and task- orientated procedures but little else.

Resilience as a response to Austerity

When asked why they thought resilience was being promoted in social work the majority of students identified the emotional demands of the role and the strain it places on their wellbeing. This response is consistent with studies on social work practice and the effect on practitioners' health (Adamson et. al. 2006; Bride 2007; Kim and Stoner 2008; Curtis et.al 2009; Newall and Mcneil 2010). Moreover, it has been argued that social workers are more vulnerable to burnout than any other profession (Johnson et al 2005; Kinman and Grant 2014 and Ferguson et al 2018). However, eight of the seventeen social work students focused exclusively on working conditions including workloads, staff retention and resources. Such factors are rarely recognised in studies on resilience and social work and where, for example, there is a recognition that there are limits to resilience in unhealthy working conditions, this is downplayed in favour of promoting individual resilience (Kinman and Grant 2011). This socially blind approach to social work is consistent with a criticism that social work is often presented as a non-political profession and seen as an ethical response to human need.

The points raised by the eight participants concerning their working experiences are reflected in the following quotes:

When you have got quite a lot of work to do and you don't have the number of workers that you need to complete those tasks, then you're going to, you know, face the situation...where you have got to have some form of resilience to go through the workload (Robert, Undergraduate student 29/06/17).

I remember going into one meeting.... they [social workers] were saying that funds had been cut for this and funds had been cut for that....and they were like, 'Where do we direct people when we don't have any services to direct them to? (Noreen Undergraduate student 28/06/17).

Funding cuts and fewer resources was commonly cited by the eight as source of stress. Keith commented that:

Every single social worker that we have talked to mentions you will [have to] put up with a lot of work and there is a lot of pressure... with the political climate...so much can change (Keith, Undergraduate student 13/06/16)

Social work practice has been shaped, along with other public services, by the 2008 global financial crisis (Harris 2014; Jessop 2016 and Ferguson et al 2018). The response to the crisis by governments was to underwrite the banks' losses and pay the sovereign debt incurred by reducing spending for the rest of society. In other words, 'socialism for the rich' (Roubini 2008: 12). The consequences for social work in the UK have been detrimental in three ways (Ferguson et al 2018).

Despite the global crisis, it appears that neoliberalism is impervious to reform as the application of market values has accelerated in social services since 2008. Although quasi-markets were introduced in adult social care from 1990 onwards, (Beresford 2013), private provision has increased including the expansion of private care homes over the last decade. This has resulted in a cultural shift from care to profits and worsening working conditions (Ferguson and Lavalette 2013). According to White (2016), the expansion of private social care has given rise to the 'shadow state', whereby private companies operate state functions, such as ATOS, a French IT firm, overseeing assessments for disability claims. A review of adult social care in the UK has identified the prevalence of market principles underpinning both the key legislation of the Care Act 2014 and services which are modelled on practices and techniques derived from the corporate world (Harris 2014).

Neoliberal response to the financial crisis have been devised as cover to shrink the welfare state further and bring in new private business and opportunities. Changes in policy have sought to increase private provision in public care as indicated by the Health and Social Care Act 2012 which requires the Secretary of State for Health to tender up to forty-nine per cent of social care to qualified private provision (Ferguson et. al 2018). 'Sure Start', aimed at supporting

‘troubled families’, excludes state-sponsored social services but seeks voluntary and private sector providers.

The state has shifted the costs of bailing out the banks to the poorest section of the working class (Ferguson et al 2018):

Austerity is the short-hand term for the economic, ideological and political strategy that has dominated Europe for over a decade since 2008. Its attraction for governments is that it appears to provide a clear and simple explanation for the current crisis (excessive government spending, especially on welfare) and a solution to that crisis (cutting wages, reducing public spending and raising taxes). In almost every case, that solution has involved 'structural reform', meaning greater market flexibility, pension reductions and the privatisation of public enterprises (Ferguson et al 2018: 16).

Sally saw the promotion of resilience because she was working in an environment where:

[there were] reducing staff numbers...reducing resources...streamlining services...a culture of penalising staff, and 'giving services away [to other agencies] (Sally, Undergraduate student 08/06/16).

Resilience then becomes deployed to ensure compliance with a seemingly dysfunctional working environment. Harris (2005) argues that social work is shaped by the capitalist state's desire to regulate and control the behaviour of those sections of society perceived as dangerous. Subsequently, the management and content of social work practice is governed by the state to an even greater degree than professions such as teaching and medicine (Harris 2014; Ferguson et al 2018).

Harris (2008) argues that social work has a weak professional identity, lacks a strong organisational representation, is subject to public vilification and underpinned by a contested knowledge base. The dominant literature and research on social work is, arguably, influenced by poststructuralist perspectives on power and how it is omnipresent in all relationships. As a result, there is little recognition that the relationship with the state subsumes other sources of power (Ferguson et al 2018).

One practice educator saw their role in the promotion of resilience in social work as involving making links with the wider social context:

If they [the student] come to you with something specific...you enable them to explore that.... take it [the issue] outside [of their] specific experience...to society, to the community, so they are working on someone who is economically deprived, and is having a real impact on their ability to parent, you look at the social aspects, look at the culture (Erica, Practice Educator 04/08/15).

Such a conception implies a broader appreciation of resilience for social work students inasmuch as students are encouraged to make sense of resilience in relation to social context. For some practice educators, understanding why resilience is being promoted in social work, and their own sense of responsibility in this task, only made sense to them as a means to challenge a highly-individualised work culture. Wilma was critical of seeing resilience exclusively in personal terms:

There is the danger...you pathologize peoples' responses so that it diverts them from the fact that sometimes the system is wrong, and as a social worker you put your efforts into partly challenging and changing that system (Wilma, Practice Educator 03/06/15).

Such a comment chimes with the principles of Radical Social Work and the argument to reclaim the *social* in social work (Lavalette and Ferguson 2007; Ferguson and Woodward 2008). Another practice educator, Clare, saw the culture of social work and the underlying values informing student social work practice as a cause for concern:

If you think about media images of people on benefit, who make a large proportion of people social workers see, and they are depicted as scroungers... there is a kind of cynicism, particularly from newly qualified social workers, who are working in a very fast- paced culture and saying, 'What you have to do is 'tick the boxes', (Clare, Practice Educator 06/06/15).

This fits with a broader concern about the culture of social work education, the content of which is reinforcing a negative view of poor people as feckless. Social workers are therefore, entitled to blame rather than support their clients (Ferguson et al 2018). There is evidence to suggest that some students may be influenced by their practice educators' views that the system, rather than the individual is to blame for the situation they face. One example was provided by Deborah who argued that resilience was required to cope with a dysfunctional system rather than 'irresponsible' people in this particular case:

A bloke... on Disability Living Allowance[DLA]... he's got ESA- that is Employment Support Allowance; he's got a doctor's note to say he is unfit to work [the letter went missing] as he is in a shared house with six other people and they had proof the post had gone missing.... So he got this letter saying his DLA had been stopped as he did not go to his appointment, only thing you can do now is claim job seekers, but you've got to be actively seeking a job...how can you actively seek a job when you've got a note...saying you are not fit to work? (Deborah Undergraduate student 28/06/17).

The above scenario has some similarities with the award-winning film *I Daniel Blake*, which itself was a critique of a welfare system portrayed as working against the interests of those most in need. Numerous other examples have been identified in various news reports which record the harmful effects changes in the welfare system has had on claimants' health and mortality. Following changes in 2012 which lengthened the maximum sanction period from six months to nine years, there were examples of claimants being excluded from benefits following cardiac arrests and rendered unfit to comply with reporting instructions. In some cases, people died after been assessed as fit for work, and their fatal medical condition had seemingly been discarded as a hindrance to employment (Cowburn 2016). The increase in the use of food banks is indicative of growing levels of absolute poverty, increasing debt and other cognate social problems (Loopster and Lalor 2017).

Deborah saw her role as challenging what she saw as an iniquitous system and fighting for the rights of her client. This could be seen as an example of a nascent social resilience, which, among things, promotes a sceptical view of individual resilience as the answer to social and structural failings (Hall and Lamont 2011). In its broadest sense social resilience promotes activism for social justice to enhance wellbeing and thus sustain resilient qualities to overcome the worst aspects of neoliberalism (Lamont and Thevenot 2000). In this instance Deborah understood resilience partly as a requirement to overturn what was seen as an inhumane decision but also as seeking to enhance resilience in her client by advocating on his behalf. Neoliberalism is not just seen as an abstract concept but recognised for the harm it renders. Social resilience involves challenging the ideas which underpin these harmful practices as well as drawing on available resources to help people (Son Hing 2011).

Resilience cannot be faulted

Lisa (20/06/16) was one student who was actively opposed to any critique of resilience. For her, resilience had helped her succeed and was a quality she could apply to get her through her placement. She was asked to cover for an absent colleague at short-notice during her own private study time and, although she felt under pressure with course work, felt a greater sense of obligation to help at her placement. Lisa said she drew upon her own resilience to support the needs of the service users and relieve the stress from her manager. In some ways, this example reflects what is sometimes referred to as 'classic resilience' (Traynor 2017: 27), however, one of the questions raised by this view of resilience is whether survival is an endpoint in itself? (Traynor 2017). Arguably, managers and social work educators could see survival and perseverance as the 'answer' as there are potential repercussions for reduced retention rates, such as failing to meet inspection targets. It is argued that exhibiting resilience in one's personal life may be a necessary and commendable quality, such as the challenge of responding to bereavement; it is, though, questionable as to whether it should be necessary for the demands of the workplace as well. Work can produce a wide range of stressors, and in these circumstances, resilience is often deployed in order to become 'hardened resilient subjects'(Garrett 2018: 144).

This raises the possibility that certain conceptions of resilience could be used to sustain potentially harmful working practices. There is an argument that in some circumstances it could be better to leave the job rather than seek to sustain the role. In his critique of resilience, Traynor cites the slogan of radical nursing groups in 1980s who wore badges saying, 'I refuse to Cope' (Traynor 2017). Similarly, radical Social Work Action Group (SWAN) in 2005 challenged the working conditions for social work practitioners (Ferguson and Woodward 2009).

Concerns that resilience could lead to dysfunctional working practices were expressed by a couple of social work students. Rachel queried:

Maybe there is such a thing as being too resilient (Rachel,
Postgraduate student 09/06/16)

A similar concern was raised by Sally who said that resilience:

[was about] bouncing back but where [do you] draw the line
between...resilient and being quite robotic? (Sally Undergraduate
student 06/06/16).

She went on to say:

You could say they [resilient workers] don't really care...you cannot penetrate that skin... so to be fully resilient you would have to be robotic (Sally, Undergraduate student 06/06/16).

Kinman, McMurray and Williams (2014) argue that such detachment could be a symptom of burnout, as stressed social workers seek to conserve their emotional energy and detach themselves from their clients' plight. It is argued that burnout can arise as result of workers being too readily available to cover work, as with Lisa. However, the same researchers also promote the notion of 'stress inoculation' to limit the exposure to stressful events, thoughts and actions. This could include detaching oneself from the immediate concerns as described as above. It is, arguably, the imprecise nature of resilience that could lead to potentially contradictory approaches to work: be able to do additional work, or be able to restrict one's availability. The above examples may also illustrate the criticism that the promotion of resilience above all else comes at a price. Being resilient means learning to 'bounce back' but the problem is that it could take you back to the place that was the source of harm originally. (Traynor 2017). One is learning to 'roll with the punches' but it may be better not to be punched in the first place (Traynor 2017: 27).

Resilience as Normative oppression

The majority of student social workers saw resilience as a way of being evaluated and controlled. Keith saw the application of resilience as a one-size fits all approach:

It [application of resilience] always disregards the person because everyone has different levels. There are some things people can do better than others. It is really very personal (Keith, Undergraduate student 13/06/16)

However, he went on to note that all social workers are exhorted to show the same degree of endurance:

[you are told] you should be resilient; this is how it should be done. This might be used to disregard peoples' experiences when they are genuinely overwhelmed...instead of saying you are over worked [you

are told] you need to be more resilient (Keith, Undergraduate student 13/06/16).

Similarly, Rachel queried:

The subjective nature of resilience... there are some things may affect anyone else, because it is so subjective, it can be difficult to measure, it could create a culture of comparison (Rachel, Post graduate student 09/06/16)

Rachel raised concerns around the way resilience could be used to make normative judgements about workers. She went on to consider how resilience could have different meanings for managers and front-line social workers; managers, Rachel argued, saw resilience as useful for hitting targets while social workers saw resilience as useful for supporting clients. These points chime to some extent, with a common criticism of resilience is that it neglects features such as race, class, gender and other forms of difference (Mohaupt 2009; Bottrell 2009 and Garrett 2015;2018).

Resilience and Gender

One possible area for exploitation arose around gender and resilience. One student social worker, Frances, considered the drawbacks of resilience for social work practice in relation to gender:

It would be interesting to compare male and female social workers as I think there would be more pressure on male social workers to be resilient. I thought it would be a more masculine quality (Asked if she thought resilience was a 'macho' characteristic replied), It is a culture where men are seen as stronger and they should be resilient. I thought there would be a lot more pressure on men (Frances, Undergraduate student 31/05/16).

The five male student social workers, or the two male Practice Educators, made no mention of gender at all or recognised that it had any significance for them as men. There are no studies on resilience and gender within social work practice. Some researchers have noted that social work is predominantly a female occupation and that stresses fall predominantly on women workers to cope with both the stresses of the role and other care commitments. But, more generally the significance of gender appears to be neglected (Kinman, McMurray and Williams 2014). The perception of resilience as a macho quality

suggests a rugged workforce primed to tackle any challenge. Garrett (2018) identifies similar discourses around resilience that appear in the military, school policy and the American Psychological Association, amongst other groups (Garrett 2018: 141-143). Other studies have argued that the pervasive values of neoliberalism have resulted in the erosion of collegiate civil values (Verhaegue 2014). A similar concern regarding social work values was raised by Rachel:

[Resilience]could be helpful because you are looking at how subjectively respond to things but then it could be a way of pathologizing [the individual] if somebody is not resilient, or finding it difficult to cope...it would be quite easy to label them...'the job is not right for them anymore'.... they are too sensitive...so labelling them as weak, not as strong...is something they[managers] build over time... it can prohibit criticism. (Rachel, Postgraduate student 09/06/16).

One aspect of this criticism is that the individual worker is forced back onto their own resources in order to cope (Boyden and Cooper 2007). Moreover, the opportunity to open up the parameters for discussion are curtailed. The power to define what stress is, as well as resilience, is decided by employers to fit with operational requirements (Bottrell 2009; Garrett 2018). It has been argued that the prevailing notion of resilience is haunted by a sense of powerlessness and pessimism about dealing with broader issues that make the apparent need for resilience necessary:

The causes of adversity that might lead to the need for resilience in the first place are silently acknowledged as too difficult to deal with and so nothing changes, or rather when it does we have not been part of the decision (Traynor 2017: xvi).

Drawing upon Mills' dictum to make public issues out of private troubles the research provoked an interest in not only critiquing dominant notions of resilience but developing a model which address their own concerns.

Theme Three: Resilience as support, not a challenge

Resilience as Emotional Containment

Nine of the sixteen students said that resilience can be understood in relation to managing stress and negative emotions. Among the many definitions of resilience, emotional regulation and emotional intelligence is cited as a core

characteristic (Harrison 2011; Beddoe et. al. 2014). It is also cited as a quality or skill to enhance in order to become resilient (Grant and Kinman 2014). The student participants saw managing negative feelings as a test of their resilience. If they demonstrated they could remain unaffected by adversity, then they were showing they could cope with the demands of practice:

Any problems that you come across, you are able to step-away, bounce back and you know, get on with it, especially if you have been faced with a trauma (Louise, Undergraduate student 20/06/16).

Here resilience has universal application as it can apply to 'any problems', irrespective of the context. This taps into one of the criticisms of resilience that it is often conceived without regard to social context (Ungar 2015). Louise went on to say that resilience means:

Just been able to deal with it, move on and you know just get on with it (Louise Undergraduate Student 20/06/16).

Here resilience is characterised as way of acting in an expedient and efficient manner. Implicit in this is the means to shut one's feelings down and not be caught up with the any emotional concern but see 'it' as an obstacle to be overcome:

...you work with service users, and you work with their problems an instead of you taking their problems home, on your mind, you leave them, at the door, bounce- back, and move- on (Louise Undergraduate student 20/06/16).

This chimes with studies on maintaining a work-life balance as part of developing resilience (Grant and Kinman 2014). Ostensibly, such an approach seems reasonable in order to manage stress, but it also places the emphasis on the individual to manage the problem as their own. They are required to detach from and compartmentalise their work, rather than engage in a wider critical perspective. Resilience can therefore be seen as about learning to be unaffected but the question remains unexamined as what is causing the problem that could be so disturbing.

Another student summed up resilience simply as the ability to:

... face adversity and keep smiling'(Aaron, Undergraduate student 15/07/16).

Many advocates of developing resilience in practice claim that it can enhance a sense of wellbeing as it is said to encourage optimism and a sense of hopefulness (Harrison 2011). This links with Mills' study of emotional labour among white collar workers where emotions become a commodity as workers had to affect certain a certain demeanour as part of their role (Mills 1955). Mills argued that this involved the psychological exploitation of workers in the similar way to Marx, who identified exploitation of physical labour in the nineteenth century (Trevino 2012).

Another student, Deborah said that:

It's so that you don't get bogged down with all... the bad stuff that you see and that you are able to ... process it and deal with it and come back another day (Deborah, Undergraduate student 28/06/17).

It is noteworthy that Deborah makes no mention of what the 'bad stuff' is, nor how or why it arises; the emphasis is on the ability to keep going in the face of adversity. The emphasis is predominantly on the individual to deal with the effects as they seek to process 'bad stuff'. The language and metaphor is redolent of a computer process; the goal is to keep functioning in a productive manner. The idea of resilience as a means of maintaining one's ability to function regardless of adversity or context was conveyed by nine other students. One noted that resilience was:

The ability to keep coming back, to keep going back in situations that can appear quite desperate, or helpless and go back with positivity, a sort of problem-solving approach, rather than a cynical 'been here before, seen it all before', kind of approach (Noreen, Undergraduate student 28/06/17).

As well as echoing the theme of perseverance in the face of adversity, there is a conception that resilience is conceived in a binary fashion inasmuch as the only other option is presented as cynicism. Consequently, a limited range of responses to the task of dealing with desperate or helpless situations seemingly co-opts an individual into maintaining a genial disposition. This echoes the spirit of positive psychology as promoted by Seligman and the focus on developing personal attributes to cope with adversity (Seligman 2002). Such a response is basically a form of denial about the causes of 'despair' and

'desperateness'; it turns the individual into a 'project' to be worked on to maintain one's ability to function (Hochschild 2012). This optimistic spirit was echoed by another student, Matthew:

.....keeping your enthusiasm and keeping your like, conviction in what you are doing in the face of difficult circumstances and bouncing back really (Matthew, Postgraduate student 16/08/17).

This, arguably, encapsulates the core message of research into social work resilience. It is promoted as sustaining a positive and affirming belief in the social work role, irrespective of challenges that present themselves; it implies that resilience is an answer to all problems encountered. It also aims to promote a positive outlook. The ability to protect one's emotional wellbeing was a specifically important aspect of characterising resilience. One Practice Educator expressed concerns at what she saw as pressure for the student to appear untroubled by their experiences on placement:

Students who appear to be coping, and will put on a front and you sit- down with them in supervision, and you start unpicking and you see a real vulnerability that they are reluctant to show in the team...they will present this bubbly, 'Oh everything is wonderful, wonderful!', and you sit there and ask them a bit... there must be something going on, some sort of emotion, if there isn't I would be worried...if you are alright all of the time (Erica, Practice Educator 04/08/15).

As noted previously, Erica also described a common feature that students hid their true feelings which were often fear and anxiety. She said the need to hide negative feelings arose:

Because they want to pass this placement, and I think that If they want to pass they have to manage everything...and if they show emotions, or any vulnerability it would be deemed as weakness. I have to reassure them as their practice educator that it is not a weakness. It is part of their engagement with people, their empathy, their understanding and without it they are not showing their human side (Erica, Practice Educator 04/08/15).

The working environment was seen as being repressive when it came to expressing feelings. What is valued are workers who present as affectless:

in certain teams it [showing feelings] is seen as a weakness; people are expected to cope, they get on with it. You have a job to do, you need to get on with it; you sort of – it is a bit sexist- but ‘man-up’...It is not something you contemplate your navel about and think about it, especially in the modern age of social work, where we have so much process- driven work (Erica, Practice Educator 04/08/15).

The process-driven culture of social work helps shape an understanding of resilience in narrow and emotionally restrictive terms. The ‘office culture’ of social work was noted by another practice educator as highly dangerous and counter-productive to ensuring staff, as well as students remain resilient:

There is a real culture in social work that you do not have lunch, you do not have a wee during the day because you are too busy, and all your colleagues are off on long – term sick, and everybody is at risk of being removed and that is perceived as the only ‘real’ kind of social work... (Wilma Practice Educator 03/06/15).

Resilience was presented in slightly caricatured terms but Wilma believed there was a culture which appeared to prize self-sacrifice to an excessive degree. A similar culture was perceived by a student who felt there was ‘dark- side’ to how resilience would be perceived by work colleagues:

[I think it is almost a dirty word... it has an implication that you cannot cope to a certain degree... you could look at it the other way there is a strength to it, but to me there is [a perception] you need resilience if you cannot cope-that is not my view-but it is an opinion could see very strong (Matthew, Postgraduate Student 15/08/17)]

A specific example of this negative perception of resilience was offered by a Practice Educator who sought to enlighten her student on the cultural practices of some placements:

[a female] student in children and families team and a middle- aged male social worker go on a home visit and there had been a distressing outcome. It had been the outcome they [social workers and family] had wanted.... it had been a mess.... he [male social worker] came back [to the office] and was really distressed and

crying at his desk. The student noticed he as crying... and quietly took (sic) him a tissue. He was publicly reprimanded by the manager and several of his peers, and [the manager] came up to the student and said it was disgraceful (Wilma, Practice Educator 03/06/15).

The practice educator went on to say that they ask their respective students to critically question the assumptions and beliefs demonstrated in this example. They were keen to offer a view that resilience did, in their view, allowed the expression of negative feelings but were aware that there was a cultural 'norm' which militated against alternate views. Resilience becomes a way of moulding a professional demeanour.

Resilience as Self-Management

Virtually all participants described resilience as a way of dealing with a fundamentally difficult job. This is not surprising as social work is a challenging profession (Thompson 2015) and it is the impetus for research into resilience and social work practice (Grant and Kinman 2014). Five students saw resilience as their way of coping with the challenges they faced:

In terms of [my] placement [it is] how I coped with children's stories.... building up emotional resilience, dealing with things like that... (Nicola, Undergraduate Student 10/06/17).

She went on to describe the trauma children had experienced and how it had affected them including suicide attempts by their wards. In this regard there is clear recognition that the reality of social work practice calls for some emotionally robust qualities. Another student noted the nature of social work is to be often engaged in conflict:

I think it [resilience] is quite important factor for social work.....working with people who are very hostile and unwilling to engage..... you need to be resilient enough to keep working with them and see it through to the very end (Keith, Undergraduate student 13/06/16).

Keith added that resilience could be characterised as not:

how hard you can hit but how hard you can get hit (Keith, Undergraduate student 13/06/16).

Here resilience is seen as the ability to endure assaults in, presumably both emotional and physical. The emphasis is on the individual to endure rather than challenge the causes or context in which such abuse arises. For another student, it is a test of individual character:

You get to a certain stage where there is that much going on that you cannot cope- resilience either takes over or it doesn't'(Aaron, Undergraduate student 15/07/16).

The emphasis is entirely on the individual and is to be understood as a personal ability to respond to events which are not queried. Other students saw resilience as a form of protection by learning to maintain or develop boundaries between daily work and personal life:

you work with service users, and you work with their problems and instead of taking their problems home on your mind, you leave them at the door, bounce-back, and move – on (Fiona, Undergraduate student 20/07/16).

Another view is that resilience is a form of emotional control and, in some cases, repression, where the aim is to manage and contain the adverse emotional consequences of harmful working experiences. This was conveyed in the following response:

it[work] was about building up a resilience and a strategy to be able to cope with what is going on...it was about saving myself...I wouldn't say saving myself...it was about ... trying to give enough to that service user but also holding back, to retain myself (Robert, Undergraduate student 29/06/17).

There is a tension in Robert's reply about the way he sought to protect himself as much as he sought to assist the service user. What appears to be emerging here is a tendency for student social worker to see resilience as a form of protection from the difficulties faced by their service users, as well as a way of coping with working environments that are demanding. Here, resilience is learning to limit the impact of the challenges faced in work rather than necessarily questioning the context in which the circumstances arise. Another example came from Fiona, for whom resilience could be understood as:

...being able to manage emotions... because you are coming across people who experience trauma'(Fiona Undergraduate student 20/07/16).

She went to say that:

I was working.... with people who were homeless, or becoming homeless, a lot on benefits and living on the poverty line. Some were in [a] hostel and some were... relying on benefits and food banks. Working with those people opened my eyes a bit...You hear these stories but you see what it actually looks like... I think it helps you build your resilience...because you are working with them and supporting them (Fiona, Undergraduate student 20/07/16).

Fiona spoke earnestly about her placement where she encountered the lived experience of poverty. She said that resilience was required in order not to feel overwhelmed by the deprivation she saw and to continue in her role. In many ways this could be seen as laudable. However, participants were focused on meeting their own learning requirements as student social workers and, although this is a significant aim, the teaching experience did not appear to encourage any further critical analysis of the structural causes of poverty or any other response that could be developed. Their own sense was that they should develop resilience to manage their sense of disturbance in the face of poverty in order to main their ability to function. Jones (1996) criticised social work education in England from its inception in the early twentieth century AS It was characterised as socially blind model which limited opportunities for social criticism and activism.

The management and control of one's feelings was expressed clearly by one student's view of how they understood resilience:

I think it [resilience] means for me, being able to put aside my values, being able to separate my own values and recognise where there might be conflict.... usually if that did happen, it would be, maybe perhaps, a personal experience, or something that I have had, that might impact on practice...so it's really been aware of that, how it would affect me and potentially how it might, in turn, affect practice'(Susan, Undergraduate student 20/07/17).

This approach seems to fit with the development of a professional demeanour which, among other things, requires the regulation of emotions (Fook 2016). However, it is also connected with the separation of one's values and arguably, to some extent, beliefs. Implicit in this is the promotion of an impersonal character. Resilience is not just the regulation of feelings but possibly subjugating them in order to affect a 'value-free' professional character. Mills argued that the penetrating control exerted by bureaucratic organisations, with an emphasis on rationality, impersonality and hierarchy, produced what he called a 'personality market' (Mills 1951: 182). This requires employees to have a standardised self-alienated personality modelled by the 'market mentality' (Mills 1951: 182).

Hochschild identified that in the service economy the 'selling' of emotions, is significant. Emotions become commodified and organisations train workers to take an instrumental approach to conveying their feeling (Hochschild 2012). The use of resilience is applied in professional practice where it has been co-opted to aid compliance in working in challenging environments. It is used to promote an impersonal professional demeanour as well as limit critical analysis (Trayner 2017).

Resilience is helpful but not the answer

When asked to consider to what extent the promotion of resilience has been helpful for their practice, virtually all the student social workers endorsed the view that it was necessary. Resilience was considered a vital quality to sustain oneself in the role and the most positive expression is illustrated by Natasha's observation:

I think it is really important to have those resilient skills because if you have worked really hard to get somewhere...I really enjoyed the course, and I really enjoy the job I will be going into, so...and when you have worked so hard to, and you're really passionate about something, it[resilience] is really important (Natasha, Undergraduate student 10/08/17).

In this instance, resilience is seen as a quality through which to achieve one's aspirations. Natasha explained that her personal circumstances were such that there were few expectations from her peers that she would be able to achieve a degree or gain a graduate job. For her, resilience was a fundamental quality associated with self-achievement. Arguably, such an expression of resilience is at one with dominant discourses of promoting individual strengths and capabilities (Bonnano 2004; Russ, et. al. 2009; Harrison

2012). However, this appreciation of resilience was at odds with other students' views; although they endorsed the view that resilience was a *sine qua non* for social work practice, they did not record it a quality that produced a sense of fulfilment. Fiona said in a less than ringing endorsement:

I suppose it is helpful... [it was necessary with the] struggle with placement and academic work...there was the overriding sense of having to get through the work and see it to the end. Less of sense of personal growth and more about showing fortitude in the face of difficulties. (Fiona, Undergraduate student 15/08/17).

Whereas for Robert it was a:

way of preparing yourself for the work and the challenging work environments (Robert 29/06/17).

Robert described having to move from one placement setting to another, partly to facilitate his learning experience but also to provide additional support for an understaffed team. These experiences suggest that resilience is required for the daily mundane tasks rather than specific challenging events (Collins 2007). Other student social workers identified the need to rise to particular challenges in their own practice setting. Louise, for example, talked about how she was given responsibility to run a support group for vulnerable adults after what she felt was little experience or preparation. She described this as a daunting task and one that placed a great strain on her own wellbeing and home life, but felt that she learnt to be resilient to cope with this (Louise, Undergraduate student 20/06/16). This appears to correspond with research which indicates that exposure to stressful experiences can be beneficial as engendering personal resilient qualities (de las Palmer-Garcia and Hombradas-Mendietz 2014). Similarly, Natasha thought that one should be 'tested' on placement and it should not be easy (Natasha Undergraduate student 10/08/17). This point could ally itself with research that suggests resilience is required to cope with the exceptional stressful demands of practice (Bonnano 2004). In one sense Natasha's views are laudable as they accord with reviews into social work education which seek to promote robust and skilled practitioners (Narey 2014; Croisedale-Appleby 2014). However, as the students were questioned about whose interests were served by this view of resilience, a rather more ambivalent view of its value emerged. Aaron said:

I think it [resilience] does need promoting...I mean resilient in a positive way, I don't mean being hard- faced (Aaron, Undergraduate student 15/10/16).

There is no doubt from this response that resilience is seen as necessary for social work practice but it implies that there is a 'positive' as well as a 'negative' approach to achieving this. It could be inferred from Aaron's broader description of his experiences that he found learning to be resilient in managing emotionally disturbed individuals as helpful to support them and improve their lives. However, implicit in this interpretation of 'positive' resilience is a belief that it aided Aaron's care for his charges, which allowed him to work in a supportive way. The 'negative' approach is around not caring, switching- off any concern and simply being 'hard-faced'. A similar point was made by Deborah:

until I started this course I had not thought about it...but the more I 've gone through it [the social work course], the more I have realised the importance of it... if you are not mentally resilient then it can effect everything (Deborah, Undergraduate student 28/06/17).

Deborah explained that she worked in a foster agency and supported children of various ages in seeking settled family environments. The nature of the role meant that vulnerable children presented in extremely difficult circumstances, so being resilient was necessary. However, Deborah expressed concern that learning to be resilient in this situation meant learning not to care:

I don't know, you seem to.... get desensitised to stuff, but... I don't know, if you get too desensitised, then you stop caring (Deborah Undergraduate student 28/06/17).

It could be argued that the two students above are describing the occupational hazards associated with such forms of emotional labour: 'the effort, planning and control needed to express organisationally-desired emotions during interpersonal transactions' (Morris and Feldmen 1996: 987). In other words, it is the way occupations, such as social work, require the instrumental use of emotions to meet the demands of the organisation (Hochschild 1983).

It has been argued that caring professions are likely to draw people who are have what is called the 'rescuer syndrome' This is characterised as having a strong sense of responsibility, high levels of empathy, or inner-directed action-orientated approach to work and a need to maintain high standards (Mitchell and Bray 1990). 'Rescuers' seemingly take on too much work and have

unrealistic expectations based on their own sense of self-worth. Burnout, it is argued, can however also result in workers distancing themselves emotionally from service users in order to preserve their energy (Maslach et al 1995). It is suggested that social workers can benefit from adopting coping techniques (such as mindfulness, cognitive-behavioural therapy and reflective supervision). In order to boost their personal resilience (Kinman and Grant 2014). In effect, workers can learn to adjust their expectations and change their own aspirations. The emphasis is on the individual to make changes rather than the working context which shapes their experience. Social workers, like nurses, are professionally socialised to adapt to the operational demands of the employer and, as such, what they need is 'not so much compassion but resilience' (Traynor 2017: 46).

Cuts to local authority spending have continued apace. From 2010 to 2017/18 there has been a 29 per cent reduction in government spending on children departments, which is estimated to be the equivalent of £3 billion (Butler 2019). This has seen a reduction from £10 billion to £7.6 billion. Adult social care saw a reduction in gross terms from £19.1 billion in 2009/10 to 17.8 billion in 2016/17 (Carson and Stevenson 2017). It was reported that although there would be an increase in expenditure for adult social care from £14.6 billion in 2018/19 to £14.9 billion in 2019/20, there will still be cuts of £700 million in order to deal with further financial pressures (Haynes 2019). A survey in 2018 showed an increase in the number of social work practitioners and managers who were looking to leave their current position in the next sixteen months. The figure had increased from 52 per cent of the workforce in England in 2017 to 61 per cent in 2018 (Haynes 2018). The number of social workers who had actually left their post had risen in 2018 by 15.7 per cent in comparison to the previous year (Haynes 2018). Research into causes of staff attrition had identified a combination of heavy caseloads, burnout, poor pay and working conditions, dysfunctional organisations and low - level of training and support (Baginsky 2013). Presenting resilience as the 'silver bullet' to the problems faced by social workers deals with the symptoms and not the causes. (Traynor 2017 xi). Being 'hard- faced' and being 'desensitised' could say more about how to survive difficult work environments than the individual workers.

Two other student social workers offered a much more critical view of the promotion of resilience in social work. Rachel acknowledged that there were times when she needed to be resilient in order to manage individual incidents from her placement experience but was wary about the way it could be used to assess the suitability of the staff for the role. She argued that student social

workers are expected to have the same confidence as established staff but allowances should be made for their lack of experience:

I think it [the benefit of promoting resilience] depends on how it is done because...I wonder if you are saying you should be resilient, but if a new social worker is not as resilient as an experienced practitioner, then the pressure to be resilient will be another factor that undermines resilience (Rachel, Postgraduate student 09/06/16).

Rachel saw requiring inexperienced staff to be as resilient as experienced workers as placing unrealistic demands on new social workers:

I wonder if resilience could be a barrier to some people because... resilience is something you build over time...as you go on...you cannot be at your maximum resilience at the first day, it has to be taken one day at a time. Resilience is not something that could be judged straight away, it is a test of time thing, isn't it? (Rachel, Post graduate student 09/06/16).

Implicit in this point was a sense that student social workers were often required to act as additional staff and required to adapt quickly to the demands placed on them under the guise of resilience. Rachel said:

If resilience is promoted in a way that is like, dogmatic... I think when promoting resilience, it is important to be clear about what that means. So, if you are saying to someone, you need to be resilient and they interpret that as meaning, 'I should not be affected by what is happening', but if they are affected... then they may think there is something wrong with them, or they are not suitable for that job. It might be OK to be affected by events (Rachel Postgraduate student 09/06/16).

The underlying concern here is how a particular view of resilience is applied as normative standard to assess the suitability of workers. Resilience is framed as being liberated from negative emotions which could accrue from dealing with human suffering. This particular notion could be understood within the context of social capital theory which it is argued, has become a dominant idea in working cultures (Fleming 2017). At its heart social capital theory is based on the notion people improve their marketable skills in order to enhance their economic job value. The employee becomes a brand, seeking to enhance skills and abilities, thus making themselves a valued commodity in a competitive

workplace (Drucker 1993; Peters 1999). The spirit, if not always the practice of social capital theory has, arguably, entered most work cultures (Fleming 2017).

Some conceptions of resilience correlate to social capital theory. The ability to manage seemingly unaffected by traumatic events, poor working conditions and increasing demands from employers can be seen as a prized commodity for the agency. It could be argued that Mills anticipated the significance of work as a means of shaping the values and beliefs of individuals so they become compliant with employers' demands (Gerth and Mills 1954; Mills 1955). Similar processes have been identified latterly as a 'new spirit' of capitalism with claims that work can be seen as form of personal development rather than exploitation (Boltanski and Chiapello 1993). A dominant neoliberal conception of resilience could, arguably, be seen as the personal reward from enduring the rigours of unpalatable working experiences.

Resilience as a Commodity

Several social work students expressed concerns about the use of resilience in practice. Deborah was critical how managers presented resilience as a quantifiable entity:

[Managers]...could use it [Resilience] as a tool to measure social workers...they might measure resilience by how much time-off sick you've had...they'll [managers] go on indicators such as how you're managing your caseload, how many clients you get to visit this week and things like that. They'll probably do it specific indicators of outcomes, or something like that (Deborah Undergraduate student 28/06/17).

This illustrates Traynor's point, that the meaning of resilience has become distorted and even exploitative. The term can be co-opted into a culture of responsabilization as noted above (O'Malley 2010). Many advocates of resilience describe adversity as a risk and so managing risk becomes a matter of personal responsibility. This is arguably consistent with the current style of government which seeks to organise society in order to devolve various forms of risk to the individual. This is illustrated by Natalie who said:

I will have an idea of what I think my resilience level is and what I expect from myself but then, obviously, you have expectations from your employer and those you work with... [your employer] is where

the control is...being used as a tool...I have never worked in that kind of setting but I sometimes worry that it will be a... kind of, 'Just get on with it', kind of thing (Nicola, Undergraduate student 10/05/17).

Mike said:

They [managers] were saying, 'You have to cope, you have to go to cope, you have to be resilient as social worker'...when you are thrown in the deep-end and when you are crying for help, they will say, 'You have got to have resilience... you are expected to cope'(Mike Undergraduate student 17/08/16).

Mike said he was asked to show resilience in dealing with difficult situations which he was not prepared for and when he asked for help, the onus was placed on him to cope. Similar sentiments were expressed by Nicola:

you would feel that you would have to cope with the workload you are given... that is extra to what you are already doing and you might feel like... I might feel I have failed if I don't [take on extra work] that puts it[responsibility] all on you (Nicola, Undergraduate Student 10/05/17).

She went on to reflect on the nature of power to determine what resilience is and how it is applied to work:

if I don't meet my own expectations of what resilience is then I have failed, and I have who I am working for and the people I am supposed to support... [but I would like] to control like, how you feel [you are [doing your work and what you take on](Nicola, Undergraduate student 10/05/17).

The power to define resilience has significance for shaping the work culture and expectations of employees (Traynor 2017). One possible example of how the subjective use of resilience could be used to distort meaning was offered by Noreen in relation to retention rates:

dominant view of resilience can... suggest somehow that they{workers}are leaving because they're failures, rather than because the situation is unbearable'(Noreen, Undergraduate student 28/06/17).

Noreen's point indicates that an understanding of retention rates and reason for staff leaving can be distorted. Gerth and Mills referred to the use of language in social settings, such as the workplace, as being part of the 'symbolic sphere' (Gerth and Mills 1953: 25). This is where the meanings and significance of one's role in an organization, including relationships with others, is framed. This is a way of 'legitimizing the social order' (Gerth and Mills 1953: 25). Resilience could be seen as part of a 'symbolic order': it is a way of judging others as well as oneself and carries with it a host of assumed values and beliefs

Resilience is as much a problem as a solution

A more trenchant criticism of the promotion of resilience was expressed by Keith. Although he saw resilience as something of use in the managing day-to-day demands, he was concerned that it was being advocated as a core skill and wary of the motives and rationale of such a movement:

I would not downplay its importance...but I feel the promotion of it is used for different ends...there are some policies saying it is ... something you require...but then you get... more government orientated duties... focused on, basically, making sure the worker can and will do more work (Keith, Undergraduate student 13/06/16).

Keith saw the promotion of resilience as a mask for more fundamental problems as it places the emphasis on the individual to take responsibility in managing the consequences of structural problems:

I do see part of it [resilience] as being a plaster over a wound...there are other underlying issues, being that a lot of people are over worked and have a lot to deal with ...a limited amount of time, resilience is used a way to cope with it...it [resilience] is coping mechanism rather than a cure... it might distract from situations where people are working far too much, there is too much stress... because they believe they have to be resilient for the sake of the service user (Keith, Undergraduate student 13/06/16).

At best, resilience is seen as a means of dealing with the stresses of deteriorating working conditions and, at its worst, becomes a way of diverting attention from the causes of stress for workers and making it about personal capacity to cope. Harriet said:

I could see how it [resilience] could be negative [in its promotion] ... it is putting a lot on people.... it could be about the amount of work and increasing the pressure, and it is made about resilience (Harriet, Undergraduate student 09/06/16).

She went onto place resilience in broader picture

Government cuts.... money and budgets...when you look at like this it seems a bit silly really...when you look at social work at the moment, I do not think emotional resilience is like the thing that is going to improve social work... it is a tiny part of it, but the broader picture is money... more people and facilities (Harriet, Undergraduate student 09/06/16).

Grant and Kinman note that:

Interventions that aim to enhance the coping abilities of individual social workers without addressing the structural causes of stress will undoubtedly fail (Grant and Kinman 2014: 12).

Yet, despite this acknowledgement, Grant and Kinman promote resilience as a beneficial quality for individual practitioners. A more strident criticism is offered by Shrecker and Bamba (2015), who argue that the effects of neoliberalism on employment has created a:

process in which labour market transformations and welfare state retrenchment combine to increase economic uncertainty and to shift responsibility for dealing with it from employers (via secure employment and funded pensions) and governments (via social safety nets like unemployment compensation) to individuals and households (Shrecker and Bamba 2015: 50)

These developments were initially identified in American societies (Hacker 2008), but have become part of social work practice in the UK. The promotion of resilience as a key feature of managing risk is seen as closely allied with the notion of 'responsibilization' (O'Malley 1999). This analysis draws upon Beck (1992), and argues that risk, in the form of threats, cannot be eliminated but only managed, and governments have a limited role to play. Individuals are responsible for managing potential risks that may befall them such as being a victim of crime. Resilience can be deployed as part of managing the potential harm arising from the stresses of work as they are encouraged to be responsible for their own wellbeing.

Theme Four: A Social Model of Resilience

Social Resilience

One student participant, Noreen raised a series of critical questions about resilience and its place in social work. In her experience, social work has become too 'fragmented':

lots of discrete, operational and administrative tasks [so it has become] difficult to see the whole (Noreen, Undergraduate student 28/06/17).

Noreen saw resilience as a means of coping with fragmentation which prevented the opportunity to think about the 'whole':

Social work is very procedural, bureaucratic... [which prohibits] relational social work [which means it is] not about challenging the system...advocating for disadvantaged groups.... [the] role is about doing a thirty-minute assessment there is the danger of focusing[only] on individual resilience [whereas we need to] try to think about it [resilience] in the context of how, where it[resilience] would be promoted and why (Noreen, Undergraduate student 28/06/17)

She expressed her concerns that the political aspect of social work had been 'neutralized' and little attention was paid to the structural factors which inform practice. Noreen was angry and asked:

How do we exercise the resilience muscle in relation to challenging some of that bigger picture? That radical role of social work... because who else is going to do it? Social work is so fragmented that [there is a] lack of collectivism... or collective approach to dealing with the bigger problem (Noreen, Undergraduate student 28/06/17).

Here the critical aspect is not merely being sceptical of resilience, but seeking collective solutions to the challenges faced by social workers. Several other student social workers noted the significance of resources, funding and broader political decisions. For example, Keith noted that, whilst many people do not necessarily go into social work to 'change the

world', there should be an engagement with politics as it shapes the social work context:

[I]see aspects of social work that should be engaged with the government procedures a lot more clout politically ... could influence changes, they could be the forefront for social work justice (Keith, Undergraduate student 13/06/16).

For Keith, a political engagement is vital in order to shape the policies which direct social work practice and create ones which are beneficial for practitioners and their service users:

It is clear there are some decisions which are completely detached from the reality that an everyday, on- the - ground social worker would be dealing with (Keith, Undergraduate student 13/06/16).

As noted above by Ferguson et al (2018), social work is one of several professions which seems to be controlled and directed by people who have no knowledge or experience of practice. A critical resilience requires a recognition of this reality and to seek a way to regain some control of working practices. Harriet said:

I think resilience is about people working together... this is what worries me about the term [resilience] the definition of it is very individualised- it is important to address your emotions but it is something we do together...if it[resilience] is presented [as to] how other people are going to support you with it. Then I can see how it can be useful (Harriet, Undergraduate student 09/06/16).

Jane took the view that lack of organisational support was a hindrance to being resilient:

By taking it [resilience] individually ... we are ...not getting organisational support... [it would be better if people] had the support, people had the opportunity to develop resilience'(Jane, Undergraduate student 09/06/17).

There has been some research on the significance of both formal and informal support networks in sustaining resilience in practice (Carson, King and Paptriano 2011; Beddoe, Days and Adamson 2014 and Kapoulistas and Corccoran 2015), however the students began to recognise the importance of

developing supportive networks. So, rather than seeing adversity as personal test of their endurance, difficulties were shared and collective support was available. This is a view which is akin to social resilience. It is a model of resilience which is characterised as the capacity of a group of people, bound together in an organisation, class, racial group, or community, or nation, to sustain and advance the wellbeing in the face of challenges to it (Hall and Lamont 2011: 2). This is a model which seeks to respond to the specific effects on neoliberalism and reject the notion of individualism. It is:

sceptical about the effects of some governments to find individual resilience the solution to social problems (Hall and Lamont 2011:2).

The key focus of social resilience is on creating environments and communities which sustain wellbeing. It shares similar ties with radical economic thought which prioritises meeting the needs of all while rejecting the conventional quest for unlimited growth (Raworth 2017). In social work there are numerous examples from around the world showing how front-line workers, along with service users and their carers have worked together in mutually supportive ways to seek social reform (Ferguson et al 2018). The most notable example in the United Kingdom is arguably Social Work Action Network (SWAN) which has campaigned on several fronts since its formation in 2005 and has established branches around the world (Ferguson et al 2018).

Four Practice Educators expressed views that are compatible with the principles of critical and social resilience. Wilma, for example, offered a trenchant criticism of resilience as it is understood in practice

Politically and strategically it [resilience] does not make a blind bit of difference does it? Well it might for the individual but, you know, there are probably people who were fairly resilient in prisoner-of-war camps... that sounds really flippant and I do not mean it too (Wilma, Practice Educator 3/6/15).

Although not known by Wilma, initial studies in resilience in health and social work had their origins in studies of survivors of concentration camps from the Nazi era (Greene 2002). Wilma offered further suggestions on how resilience could be conceived for practice:

People think resilience is all about dealing with the trauma in other peoples' lives.... but the resources are not there, or the law is not there, so... there is a danger we in that we put the emphasis on the

resilience of the practitioner... we are not putting any on challenging oppressive systems. And when I say oppressive, I mean ones that don't challenge social injustice... I wouldn't want resilience to be at the expense for the fight for social justice...there is a danger... [if]you pathologise peoples' responses [to oppressive systems] so that you divert them from the fact that... the system is wrong. And as social worker you should put your effort partly into challenging and changing that system'(Wilma, Practice Educator 3/06/15).

The views above were representative of three other Practice Educators who became critical of placing too much stress on the individual and valued the importance of promoting a team ethic. Rebecca (7/7/15) and Erica (4/8/15) both cited the importance of a collegiate team to support and sustain each other in practice. This was seen as fundamental to helping students in their practice. There was also a significant emphasis placed on recognising the political context in which social work is conducted. Charlotte said she wanted students to make a connection between the individual and the political, including between themselves and their clients:

I think social work is a political activity and... I think that people need to be politicised in order to be challenged [and challenge] (Charlotte, Practice Educator 10/6/15).

In sum, the Practice Educators saw benefits to resilience for individual practice but were, nevertheless became critical of its application as the only answer to their student social workers and clients' respective challenges. They sought to develop a critique rooted in the political context, challenge dominant ideas and seek collective responses within the context of teams. There is, tentatively the basis to facilitate a 'community of publics' (Mills 1956). It may not meet the four requirements as proposed by Mills but it could meet its spirit by facilitating a critical discourse, a sharing of ideas and alternative approaches to resilience.

Social Work and Social Resilience

Drawing upon those researchers who have sought to develop links between the environment and resilience, such as Botrell (2007) and Ungar (2012;2013;2018), the students sought to develop a model which is based around community support. For example, Bottrell (2007) argues that resilience is not just about drawing on the resources that are available but that is also about resisting negative forces in the environment. In this context resilience is defined as:

practices which empower opposition to rules and norms in specific contexts and which contain critiques of social relations, from the lived experiences of marginalisation (Botrell 2007: 599).

Some of the student social workers offered their own examples of this approach to resilient practice. Deborah identified ways she could interpret eligibility criteria to facilitate access to resources for her client. Noreen also described how she would be an advocate for her clients in challenging operational and administrative decisions in relation to housing and related benefits. She had to challenge what she saw as 'institutional norms' to enhance wellbeing. Bottrell, though, does emphasise the responsibility of the individual, both worker and client, to resist oppressive social forces. In other words, the approach does not necessarily promote social activism of political conscientization, but rather a focus on specific and local issues to be challenged (van Breda 2018). However, this is an approach to resilience which moves away from simply coping with adversity towards one that seeks to make some change to the environment.

These are ideas which resonate with researchers who seek to locate resilience within the framework of challenging social injustice. For example, Hart et.al. seek to conceptualize resilience in such a way that addresses social inequality for disadvantaged families. This involves accessing community resources. (Hart et al 2015). Such ideas can also be related to developments in community work which are centred around social activism (Healy 2012; Ife 2013; Gal and Gal-Weiss 2013 and Forde and Lynch 2015). The key point is that these developments can all signify an orientation to a social model that shows resilience emerges from our dependency on each other rather than on ourselves. This is a point emphasised by Ungar as he argues that resilience lies in the social resources we have, such as supportive relationships, rather than in ourselves. He makes the point that 'resilience depends more on what we receive than what we have' (Ungar 2019: 10). Ungar states that the Resilience Research Centre at Dalhousie University has yet to find a resilient individual who did not depend on a beneficial social ecology. The challenge is to develop what such a model could look like for student social workers. This is discussed in the final chapter.

Chapter Five Conclusion

A Community Resilience Paradigm

There is an argument for a new model of social care which can offer a basis for a community resilience model. The Community Paradigm model is presented as being the fourth model of social care that addresses current social problems. Thomas Kuhn developed the concept of paradigm as having two chief elements: first, a framework which accommodates a range of acceptable practices and beliefs for enquiry; and second, a principle or understanding that governs the understanding of that enquiry. The principles and ideas are shaped by historical context. These dominant principles can be challenged by a new reality which results in new approaches. (Kuhn 1963). The three previous care paradigms can be identified as:

- 1 Civic - which covers the sixteenth century to the early twentieth century and is characterised by local, patchwork care provision;
- 2 State- which covers approximately the 1940s to the 1980s and is characterised as a centrally-run system with uniform provision;
- 3 Market- introduced in the 1980s and sought to drive diverse, efficiently run private services (Lent and Studdart 2019).

These paradigms reflect broader changes in the social condition according to neoliberal discourse. The state model is inflexible to individual need and the market model engages in an endless quest for efficiency (Cottam 2018). In light of the financial crisis of 2008 and subsequent austerity it is argued that both the Keynesian and neoliberal models have failed and a new social settlement is sought (Featherstone et.al. 2018). Community is seen as the source for a new arrangement. Community is defined as:

A network of individuals collaborating more or less formally to achieve a shared, socially beneficial goal (Lent and Studdert 2019: 34).

This research has shown that fourteen of the students and three Practice Educators suggested the value of locating resilience in supportive relationships and communal networks. Recent research has argued for an understanding of resilience that is rooted within a social context (Galpin et.al. 2019). There is evidence which argues that 'resilience is almost more nurture than nature' (Ungar 2019: 18). The notion of the resilient individual, separate from social ties and self-reliant is shown as a myth. Instead resilience is based on supportive networks. The students and Practice Educators sought to locate

develop a network that could promote nurturing relationships, and an opportunity to acquire resilience through shared knowledge. Such a model could be fostered via a community paradigm model. The community paradigm is based on six principles (Cottam 2018) which could help form a basis for a social model of resilience. These are:

1. Wellbeing and the Aristotelian idea of the good life'. One way this could relate to resilience is to challenge the individualised notion of resilience and to promote a version based on 'what is central to our humanity: our interdependence' (Featherstone et al 2018: 25). This could envisage seeing resilience as political, that is to say, rather than asking people to show resilience in the face of difficulties, promote an environment where people can ask what resources (material, psychological, guidance), are required to be resilient. This can also record where there are gaps in resources and identify limits to resilience.
2. Focus on capabilities, that is to say the opportunities that allow people to flourish. Such an ability depends on assuming agency. One way this could be achieved is by challenging the way resilience is conceptualized in an instrumental way that allows for exploitative practices. Instead, the opportunity to question who decides what is the appropriate application of resilience in practice can be challenged. What is being proposed is the development of an ethical dimension to resilience. Drawing upon the ideas of Ife (2012), who sought to develop a model of practice based on rights, one could make a distinction between deductive and inductive approaches to applying resilience.

A deductive approach can look at how current constructions of resilience can apply to specific situations, in other words, an individualised in applied in all cases. The inductive approach is more interesting as it asks practitioners to identify rights that are applicable to a specific situation. In other words, a question could be asked as to whether asking workers to be resilient in a particularly adverse context is ethically appropriate. Similarly, Bottrell asked to what extent should adversity should be tolerated and how much adversity individuals should tolerate before social arrangements, rather than individuals, are targeted for intervention (Bottrell 2009).

3. Relationships are, arguably, the most important aspect of the Community Paradigm. Cottam (2011) notes that the ability to tell a story

of where you have come from, and where you hope to go is a significant indicator of progress and resilience. The point is that resilience is rooted in the meaning people give to their experiences. Meaning is rooted in social context and the relationships people have. Resilience can arise from shared connections and the ability to learn from each other. A number of Practice Educators and a few students valued the importance of a supportive team, willing to help each other, as a source of resilience. This could also relate to the fourth principle which is to connect multiple forms of resources. This can include material support but it can also encompass the benefits of experience, expert knowledge and access to other forms of social capital that individual workers can facilitate.

- 4 Advocates the importance of creating opportunities by being open, or inclusive as a means of support. These principles are allied to the claim that 'resilience depends more on what we receive than what we have' (Ungar 2019: 10). There is a need to think about what opportunities can be created for student social workers and their practice educators to develop supportive and constructive networks.
- 5 Follows on from the point above and advocates the importance of creating opportunities to share experiences, learn from each other's practice and strategies to challenge poor working conditions can be a way of developing resilience.

Towards a Radical Resilience

Half of the social work students wanted to broaden the meaning of resilience to incorporate social context. Mike (07/07/16) suggested resilience should be a key part of the social work curriculum but the ability to develop a critiques of its limitations should be made clear with a view to show how it can be deployed to manipulate and control people to be compliant with exploitative practices. Harriet also argued for the need to:

'...think it [resilience] through more...to be more critical (Harriett, Undergraduate student 09/06/16).

For Harriet, a fundamental part of being resilient was the ability to challenge and question the context in which she worked, rather than a resilience that called for acquiescence. Similarly, both Rachel (09/06/16) and Francis (20/07/17), stated that a key feature of being resilient involved the ability to be aware of the potential for exploitation the ability to resist such demands. This argument could fit with Traynor's definition of critical resilience

as an approach based on, 'understanding ourselves and our agencies in relation to our society' (Traynor 2017: 29). Implicit in this view is the need to draw boundaries between the capabilities of the resilient individual and structural inequalities in society; links between personal experience and the political context are also made by a few practice educators. For example, Wilma said that

[The] personal and the social are interconnected... resilience can be destroyed by the 'right' environment... [student social workers] need to be critically reflective of the environment (Wilma, Practice Educator 03/06/15).

Such a position accords with Mills' argument to:

Try to understand men and women as social actors, and the ways in which ... men and women are ...framed by societies (Mills 1959: 155).

Keith (13/06/16) and Matthew (15/08/17) saw resilience as arising from support from others as part and parcel of shared collective response to the challenge of practice. Noreen (28/06/17) expressed an aspiration that resilience could be recast to embrace a socially empowering notion but was not clear what this would look like in practice. Whilst van Breda (2018) acknowledges that Garrett made a justifiable criticism of the individualist tendencies in much resilience research, he also argues that Garrett did not recognise a wider tradition in social work which links the individual and the social context. This can be traced back to the 1920s and the 'person-in-environment' model of social work (Richmond 1922).

The 'person-in-environment' approach seeks to focus on the tension between the individual and the structural/social environment which surrounds that person, or family (Weiss-Gal 2008). On this basis social work can and does adopt a dual commitment to both agency and structure (van Breda 2018). This aim is recognised in the global definition of social work:

Social work engages [both] people and structures to address life challenges and enhance wellbeing (International Federation of Social Work 2014).

Charles Wright Mills argued that:

It is the writer's responsibility to orient modern public to the catastrophic world in which they live...But he cannot do this if he remains a mere specialist. To do it all, he's got to do it big (Mills 2000).

In order to, 'do it big', we need to understand issues within the context of their history and the broader social context in which ideas are located. More specifically, he advocates an approach which transcends boundaries of specialist knowledge and recognises the larger social forces which shape individual problems. Mills shows that social problems tend to be regarded as evidence of individual failings and there is a collective unwillingness to appreciate the harmful effects of capitalist societies. We need to find ways to prize open and extricate the way these influences exert themselves on people (Smyth et al 2014).

The emergent model of a radical resilience appears to be consistent with Mills' perspective. The challenge for social workers in being resilient lies not within the ability of the individual to adapt to their environment, but to question how such conditions have been created. This, in part, involves a critical awareness that the dominant view of resilience is framed as a personal responsibility separated from other areas of life, such as economics, politics, and wider social conditions. Such matters need to be of a primary consideration when considering factors shaping resilience. What are the forces that are affecting wellbeing and what areas can be resisted and challenged? In making links between the broader structural forces that shape both the lives of social workers and their clients, is to challenge the view that social work is an apolitical activity.

The prevailing view of the government is that social workers are ostensibly apolitical in their practice. They are nevertheless, subject to policy decisions which are themselves political in nature and devised by people who often have no direct knowledge or experience of social work. A radical model of resilience questions claims about who has the right to frame social problems and what counts as legitimate knowledge for practice. This would involve questioning the role of social work, the context in which practice is shaped and finding ways to resist the effects of oppression. Such an approach arguably should be a part of the social work curriculum as students can benefit from the opportunity to challenge dominant notions of resilience. Students can be taught that resilience resides as much in their collective response to the challenges they

face. This approach could, arguably, accord with Mills' own aspiration of what freedom from oppression could look like:

[A] chance to formulate the available choices, to compare them - and then, the opportunity to choose (Mills 1959: 174).

From a Millsian perspective, radical resilience could be useful to raising awareness of the harmful effects of neoliberalism and facilitating resistance to the demands made on student social workers. This stands in contrast to the dominant view of resilience deployed to make 'cheerful robots', that is, a mass of workers finding satisfaction in their ability to adopt uncritically to the demands placed upon them. For Mills, true democratic freedom is realised when individuals become aware of and want to do something about the social forces which constrain them. Several student social workers were able to query and reject the way resilience was defined and applied in practice. They were critical of the potential it had to make them conform unthinkingly to the demands of their placement. A few others sought to implement low-level acts of subversion in their practice. In the spirit of 'street-level bureaucrats (Lipskey 1972), the students sought to bend rules in favour of the clients. Arguably, this could fit with a model of social resilience (Hall and Lamont 2011; Ungar 2015).

A question remains as to whether it meets Mills' proposal to 'do it big'. In some respects, the proponents of a more radical approach to resilience do question the meaning and definition of resilience, and seek to locate its application within a political and social context. However, it is arguable if it promotes the opportunity to seek more fundamental changes to the social context. In order to deliberate this question further it would be useful to consider how resilience could be applied within the framework of a Radical Social Work perspective.

Radical Resilience and Radical Social Work.

One way to promote social justice is to be engaged in reclaiming and redefining the meaning and purpose of social work. Radical social work is often at odds with official definitions of social work which are prescribed by government agencies and predominantly characterised as clinical and apolitical, usually focused on individualistic and moralistic interpretations of human problems. Definitions matter as they can influence the social work curriculum, shape values and inform the practice of social workers. For example, the most recent international definition of social work, cited above, is criticised for limiting the profession's commitment to social justice (Ferguson

et al 2018). In contrast, the IFSW's 2002 definition of social work articulates a commitment to social justice as core feature of social work:

Utilising theories of human behaviour and social systems, social work intervenes at the points where people interact with their environment. The principle of human rights and social justice are fundamental to social work...' (International Federation of Social Work 2002, cited in British Association of Social Work 2012).

The focus on social justice would certainly fit with a model of radical, or critical resilience. However, the change to the subsequent definition, which, according to Ferguson et.al (2018), offers a mutually conflicting set of principles for social work, and loss of clarity about social justice, means that practitioners, students social workers and teachers, need to engage in a debate on what social justice could mean in practice. Social work students can be reminded of the unique position they occupy to work with, and recognise the effects of inequality on the most vulnerable in society (Ferguson et al 2018). They can seek ways to challenge social inequality and have discussions on poverty and oppression with those they work with, and raise it where it is silenced. In this regard, a radical perspective would accord with Mills' claim to 'take it big', that is, to recognise the contradictions and harmful effects of modern capitalist societies. There is a paradox that on the one hand it can be argued that neoliberal version of capitalism has created unparalleled wealth but that it is increasingly concentrated in fewer hands (Standing 2016). This has increasing significance in light of the 2018 United Nations report into the extent of poverty in the UK (Aire 2018). The investigation, led by Professor Philip Alston, special rapporteur on extreme poverty, described levels of child poverty in the UK as 'staggering', and estimated that around one fifth of the UK population, (fourteen million), were living in relative poverty, with one and half million people being destitute at some point over the previous twelve months since the report was published (Aire 2018). Relative poverty was defined as people living with less than 55 per cent of median income, taking into account costs such as childcare, housing, debt and disability. This follows on from studies by Oxfam in 2013 which identified levels of inequality in the UK which are comparable to Victorian times (Stuckier and Basu 2013). A challenge facing social workers is to charter a path between the top-down bureaucratic approach which seeks to individualise problems, and an alternative which offers:

A genuinely non- stigmatising and anti- oppressive social work practice...rooted to the principles of social justice (Ferguson et al 2018: 156).

This would however, require a significant the redistribution of resources. Although Ferguson et al offer a number of examples of social activism instigated by social workers from across the world, a rich history and tradition of social justice practice has been written out of accounts of social work in the UK (Ferguson et. al. 2018). Instead, most historiographies offer examples of charismatic pioneers who provided a ready array of skills to remedy the problems of dysfunctional families and 'problem groups'. Consequently, the literature is shallow and limited in scope. This could help explain the difficulties that social work students face in seeking to develop a critique of resilience and to formulate an alternative. The challenge is how to develop a notion of resilience that actively engages in meaningful social change. One possible answer could be in the promotion of a new radical social model proposed by Ferguson et al (2018).

Radical Resilience and New Social Work Radicalisation

In formulating a new model for radical social work practice, Ferguson et al propose three core elements in order to promote social justice and overturn neoliberalism.

First, they talk about the importance of reclaiming relationships. It is argued that one of the pernicious effects of the marketisation of social work is that personal relationships have been lost in the pursuit of metrics. This was a complaint made by some of the practice educators who saw their students engaged in procedural matters rather than with human beings. Resilience was applied in this context to ensure processes were adhered to, rather than the requirements of service users. Reclaiming relationships is based on the principle that social work is based on meeting human need, rather than market considerations of competition, efficiency and profit. The history of social work has tended to emphasise the significance of personal relationships at the expense of structural factors. Resilience can be promoted through individual support and by consciousness raising about the forces of social inequality.

One way this could be done is to embed a critical model of resilience in the curriculum. Students said they felt understanding resilience was crucial to their practice but wanted to a wider knowledge of what it means for social work. Drawing on the ideas of Lakoff (2003; 2014) around metaphors and framing,

resilience can be reconceptualised around the metaphor of gaining strength through supportive networks. Lathouras (2010), for example, advocates the importance of enabling dialogue between people as a means from learning from each other in a reciprocal process. This approach is influenced by Freire's (1997) theory of conscientisation, a dialogical process that can lead to critical analysis of one's existing situation. It is a process that help link the personal with the political. One way this could be done is to draw upon the ideas of a socially just school as described by Smyth and Simmons (2018). The value of honesty in the students could be prized in recognising areas of exploitation they have encountered from their placement. This can be used to recognise the limitations of the uses of resilience and its harmful effects. Moreover, students can be encouraged to be co-producers of knowledge of social resilience. They can share and understand the importance of supportive relationships in sustaining relationships. Practice Educators can focus less on identifying personal deficits but more on enabling skills. Students can be helped to note any tendency for self-blaming in their practice and help locate difficulties within a structural context. In other words, struggling to cope is not necessarily a personal problem but related to a social issue.

Another opportunity is to develop, or continue to develop, a radical theory of resilience for a radical practice. This recognises that social work requires practical skills but needs to address complex issues and understand them within the political context. Fundamentally there is a need to keep developing ideas to make sense of the world and to find ways to make a difference. This was an idea envisaged by Mills in his view of what a 'true' democracy could look like. For Mills, true democratic freedom is realised when individuals become aware of, and want to do something about the social forces that constrain their lives. The ideal is that scattered individuals find a way of working together to discuss public issues (Mills 1959). For radical social workers it is looking to build a coalition of practitioners, teachers, students and service users to share ideas and strategies. For Mills, it was an aspiration that sociologists and intellectuals would find common ground to develop a 'politics of responsibility' (Mills 1958). Considine et. al. (2015) advocated a model of social resilience with the social work curriculum through the use of group work which underpins the importance of collaborative learning and support. This can be developed further so that students can be supported in establishing ways that they can support each other on placement. This can include providing opportunities for practical advice on resources and expertise that is available within the region. Forums can be established so students can share their experiences from placement and seek advice and input from their peers.

Social work students have established their own society. This can afford them the opportunity for various forms of activism in order to address the consequences of social inequality. It is also a further area for social support and networking. In effect, students are being asked to engage in the potential value of what Mills proposed, namely, 'thinking against something' so that students may begin to 'understand a new intellectual field' in relation to resilience and social justice. It could, according to the Mills, bring into existence a new 'imagined world' (Mills 1959:231).

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